Monday, December 15, 2008 | 15 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 7 | P10 | www.inquirer.net

Food for thought from multi-awarded culinary writer Amy Besa

LEARNING / J4

Low voter turnout in Quezon plebiscite

ACROSS / A19

Cebu Dolphins sweep Dumaguete batters

SPORTS / A29

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESSLY

QC community keeps Christmas village secret

By Julie M. Aurelio

AT A GATED COMMUNITY in Quezon City lies a well-kept Christmas secret—city cities dotted with pine trees, twinkling with lights, and spread out across layers of make-believe snow.

On a cool evening, children from the

QC COMMUNITY / A2

MINI-WONDERLAND Toy cities in this Christmas village with lights and make-believe snow never fail to amaze neighbors visiting the home of businessman Allan Tejada in Quezon City. JOEY ARGUILLES

Qatar offers 37,000 jobs

TOP OF THE WORLD Miss World Ksenya Sukhinova from Russia (center) is flanked by First Princess Parvathy Omanakuttan from India (left) and Second Princess Gabriella Wickham from Trinidad and Tobago during the beauty pageant in Johannesburg, South Africa. AP

GMA sees little effect of crisis on OFWs

By Michael Lim Ubac and Jovanie Aning

DESPITE THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN, 37,000 jobs still await Filipinos in Qatar, President Macapagal-Arroyo said.

However, the ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon stays.

The President, who is in Doha, Qatar, on a three-day official visit, made the announcement as she expected "only a minimal displacement of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) despite the financial crisis sweeping across the globe."

Some 20 million people may lose their jobs between the third quarter of this year and the end of 2009 as a result of the global financial crisis, the International Labor Organization said in October before the world economy further weakened.

Jobs have been gained not only in industrialized economies like the United States and the European Union, but also in developing countries dependent on exports like China as the US financial crisis turned into a global economic crisis.

Ms Arroyo told Filipinos in Qatar that instead of retrenching its expatriate workforce, Qatar would need 37,000 more workers starting January.

The job openings come as revenues of oil exporting countries like Qatar weaken amid plunging crude oil prices. Real estate pro-

QATAR OFFERS / A12

Con-ass bid in House derailed

By Amando Doronila

THE CHARTER CHANGE (Cha-cha) express train was derailed on Friday after running head-on against the most broadly based civil society mass protest in Metro Manila since the declaration of a national emergency by President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2006.

The 10,000 crowd that packed the intersection of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas did not come up to the mammoth scale of the people power demonstrations at Edsa that deposed President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

But the explosion of rage against Cha-cha expressed in the

CON-ASS / A4

Nograles declares ceasefire on Charter change debates

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WITH THE HOLIDAYS JUST around the corner, Speaker Prospero Nograles declared a ceasefire on Charter change (Cha-cha) moves in the House of Representatives to cool down riling opposition from senators and civil society and religious organizations.

In a text message to the bi-

cameral assembly, Nograles said: "Charter change discussions will begin when we resume session on Jan. 20. Now it's budget and CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) only."

Lakas officials have discussed a Senate resolution to convene a constituent assembly (Con-ass) as a mere scrap of paper without the Senate's participation and shifted support to a constitutional convention after 2010.

But Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez of Kampi said President Macapagal-Arroyo's Kampi party was not about to give up on the assembly initiative.

"We have no problem with the ceasefire on Cha-cha during the Christmas season, but we still believe that Con-ass is worth

NOGRALES / A4

Heady challenges facing Obama keep growing

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT-elect Barack Obama, relatively young and inexperienced, is facing a rapidly growing list of monumental challenges as he prepares to take the reins of a nation in turmoil.

"I do not underestimate the enormity of the task that lies ahead," Obama said after his historic election a little more than a month ago. It was a sobering assessment at the time.

But America's problems have only worsened since then. Now, Obama sounds dire, particularly as he talks about the economy. "We're in an emergency."

Obama spoke during a week in which Congress killed a $14-billion bailout of the failing auto industry, jobless claims spiked to their highest levels in more than a quarter-century and the federal budget deficit hit record levels in November.

With woes foreign and do-

HEADY CHALLENGES / A22

Virtual seatmate for Joker pushed

By Christine O. Avendaño

IF SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA had his way, he would like to see Sen. Jinkee Arroyo have detained Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV for his virtual seatmate.

That is, if the Senate amends its rules and allows Trillanes to

VIRTUAL / A6

Poetry saved me, says 'Tagaytay 5' member

By Nina Catherine Calleja

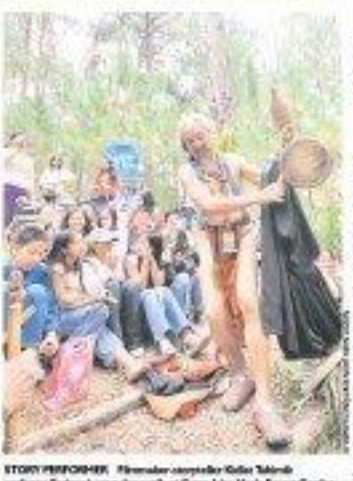
IT WAS HIS POETRY THAT KEPT him sane during his darkest moments in prison. It was also his poetry that may have brought him close to death and—ironically—what probably saved him.

Now a free man and author of a recently published anthology of poems, Ariel Pinpin, one of the so-called "Tagaytay 5" heroes, can look back with calm because at his two years of detention in Camp Vicente Lim in Laguna.

"I was even thinking of giving them (the police) copies of my book, a gift for them this Christmas," he told the Inquirer at the launch of his "Pagsusuong Matandâ" (Old-tongued Verses) collections at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, on Dec. 3.

He said he hoped his poems would tear through the "Thick

POETRY / A8



STORY PERFORMER Filmmaker-storyteller Kidlat Tahimik performs Enrique's story for pupils at Camp John Hay's Secret Garden.

Filmmaker takes school kids around the world

By Vincent Cabreza and Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—FILMMAKER Kidlat Tahimik, his 92-year-old mother Virginia and his 21-year-old son Rahmatan made the world of about 80 schoolchildren go round and round on Saturday with a tale about the first Filipino to circumnavigate the globe.

The children, who attended the second Inquisitik Read-Along session in northern Luzon this year, were treated to an interactive performance by Kidlat and his family that provided three generations' worth of perspective on Ferdinand Magellan's slave, Enrique de Malacca.

FILMMAKER / A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Tornado country, still experiencing partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms. Winds to 15 kph, mostly coming from the northeast with calm seas. Low and Calabarzon: Partly cloudy.

Metro Manila	Partly cloudy	Subic/Olongapo	Cloudy with rain
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Batanes	Cloudy with rain
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cubo	Cloudy with rain
Aparri	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with rain
Dagupan	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with rain
Legaspi	Partly cloudy	Cebu/Mactan	Cloudy with rain
Virac	Partly cloudy	Dipolog/Pagadian	Cloudy with rain
Catarman	Cloudy with rain	Davao	Cloudy with rain

Weather forecast by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa)

Weather forecast: San Diego/Laguna Beach: sunset 5:20 PM San Diego — San Diego/Laguna Beach: sunset 5:20 PM San Diego

Second FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/news

EZ2 (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday draws)
25 30 15 8

SUPERTRIS (Daily draws)
8 7 5 1 2 7
1 5 4

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
6 13 24 27 51 42
P160,299,930.40

Peace talks seen resuming soon

Christmas ceasefire with MILF also expected after GMA visit to Qatar

By Michael Lim Ubac

'TIS THE SEASON FOR PEACE.

Malacañang hopes to announce a Christmas ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) during the anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on Dec. 22.

"Malacañang believes that informal talks between the government and the MILF are expected to start shortly after the President's official visit to Qatar, possibly by Dec. 21," a Palace statement said.

Peace process adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. had told reporters at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport before he left with President Macapagal-Arroyo for Doha, Qatar, on Saturday that the MILF "had been calling for international guarantors in the peace process and Qatar could be one of them."

President Arroyo announced she was going "to seek the counsel and support of Qatar in the search for lasting peace in Mindanao" after her visit to Malaysia.

In Cotabato City, however, MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said he did not see how it was possible to start talks before Christmas when there will soon nothing to talk about.

"The issue of the normalization of agreements on ancestral domain cannot be tackled because the government does not want to talk about it. The MILF on the other hand, wants any discussion to center around it," he said by phone yesterday.

Iqbal said it was not possible for negotiations to resume this month because neither side had agreed to discuss anything.

"If ever it can resume, the only possible topic up for discussion would be the international monitoring team. But I doubt it will happen," he said.

Iqbal also said that aside from the lack of topics to discuss, the government peace panel had not been completed yet.

"Our panel was never disbanded so we can sit and talk anytime," he said.

Palace spokesperson Anna Dumma, however, said the government "might announce in a manner of days" the composition of its new peace panel.

"The President wants the new peace panel to be composed of representatives from Mindanao's cross-section. There are names being considered now. Let us just wait," he said.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro said yesterday there would be a suspension of military operations in Mindanao "for a few days" because of the Christmas celebration.

But he said this would not affect the police pursuit of MILF rebels wanted for recent atrocities.

"There's no unilateral cease, what we have is a suspension of offensive military operations for a few days. However, this does not mean we will not pursue criminal violations, like what is happening now in Basilan. And it does not mean we will put our guard down," he said.

International organizations have been calling on the Philippine government and the MILF to stop the fighting which has displaced hundreds of thousands in Mindanao.

An encouraging development was the appointment on Dec. 1 of Foreign Undersecretary for Special Concerns Rafael Seguis as the government's new chief negotiator.

The MILF welcomed the move. In a statement issued Dec. 4, the MILF said the appointment was "a manifestation of the goodwill of the government to the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, Bangsamoros or Filipino alike."

Hostilities erupted between government troops and MILF forces when the Malaysian-facilitated peace talks collapsed in August after the Supreme Court junked the memorandum of agreement granting Islamic autonomy to an expanded homeland.

The high court declared the proposed agreement "unconstitutional."

Ms. Arroyo then announced she was developing a new strategy for peace in Mindanao that would shift from negotiating with armed rebels to negotiating with communities.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita clarified that the administration had not totally abandoned the peace process, and that the two sides could resume talks.

"The peace process is still on," he had said, pointing out that the GRP-ceasefire and the international monitoring team remained in place. *Edu Punay, Norman Bordadora and Abs. Cecilia Rodriguez, Inquirer Mindanao*

Lacson: Aides forced to name me

By Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. PANFILO LACSON YESTERDAY said that certain police and military officials tried to implicate him in former police aides, Cesar Mancao and Glenn Dumlao, to implicate him in the 2000 murders of publisher Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

Lacson appealed to the officials to "let the wheels of justice grind" and not threaten or make promises to Mancao and Dumlao, who are both undergoing witness protection in the United States.

Interviewed over radio dzBB, Lacson said he was in his possession a statement Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim is said to have turned over to President Macapagal-Arroyo to implicate him in the Dacer-Corbito case.

Lacson also said that Dumlao, in his statement, did not implicate the senator in the murders.

Mancao, meanwhile, through his wife, next week to Lacson that a military official "close to President Arroyo" had promised to release him and promote him to general if he implicated the senator in the case.

Lacson said, quoting Mancao, that it was a top military intelligence official who talked to Mancao in September.

"I have absolutely nothing to do with the (Dacer-Corbito) case," Lacson said.

AFP: Troops buy uniforms, too

By Jocelyn R. Uy

SOLDIERS ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR the purchase of their uniforms, a military official said yesterday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres Jr. said part of the military clothing allowance given to enlisted men and women in the ranks of the soldiers could purchase some of their uniforms.

Government troops are provided an initial clothing allowance (ICA) of P10,500 when they enter the service. Soldiers receive P10,000 in semi-annual clothing allowance (SCA) every three years if they are deemed fit to continue in the service, Torres said.

Under the RCA, a soldier receives his/her dress uniform, boots, general officer attire, t-shirts and rubber shoes plus a cash allowance.

Commanders inspect enrolment orders to make sure they used their cash allowance appropriately.

"In this setup, provision for the uniform is a shared responsibility of the soldier and the military organizations," Torres said.

He heard the reminder to soldiers fighting terrorists and insurgents in Mindanao who asked for new combat boots and uniforms on Christmas.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. on Saturday said P36 million had been earmarked for the procurement of combat boots and uniforms.

'Ulysses' seen strengthening or turning

TROPICAL STORM "ULYSSES" COULD strengthen into a storm or it could change course due to a cold front, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said yesterday.

At 2 p.m. Sunday, Ulysses, with international name "Dolphin," was estimated at 630 kilometers east of Virac, Catanduanes, packing maximum winds of 85 kph near the center with gustiness of 105 kph. It is forecast to be moving west at 15 kph, according to Pagasa.

"The disturbance was still too far to affect any part of the country, the weather bureau said.

Pagasa chief Nilo Princo said the typhoon over the plains the storm could change course.

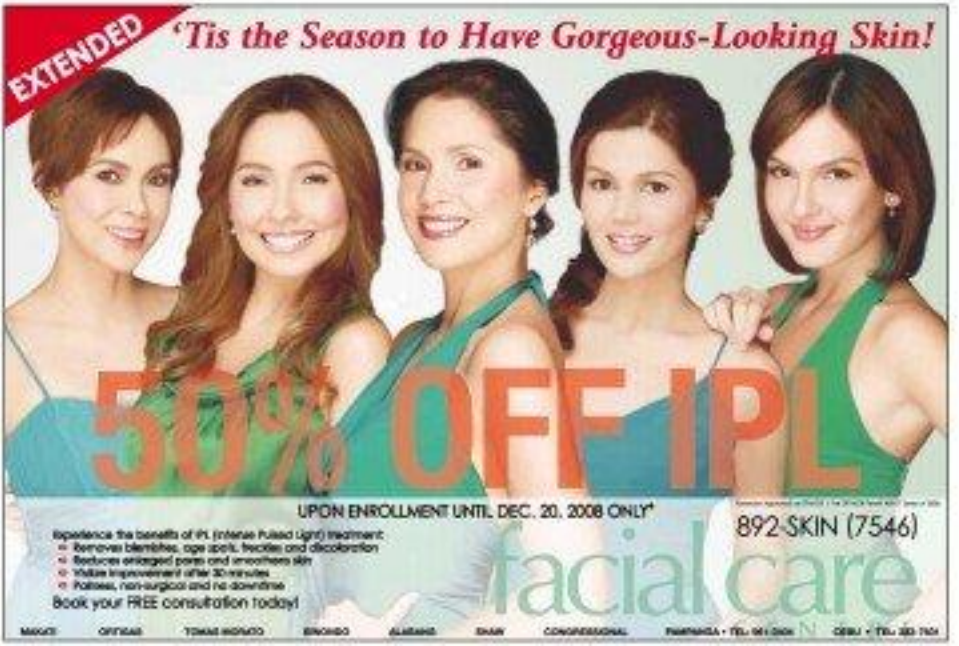
"Based on the models we're checking, all of them indicate that it might hit Luzon. But we continue to monitor the storm's path because it could also change," Princo said in Filipino.

Ulysses is expected to hit Virac on Monday and 580 km east of the town tomorrow. The storm is expected to hit Zambales on Wednesday.

Princo said "we could have another storm" before the year ends.

As to 5 p.m. bulletin, Pagasa said "the whole country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms."

Nikko Dizon, with a report from Inquirer Northern Luzon



Filmmaker takes school kids around the world

From page A1

Enrique is the subject of Kidlat's still unreleased independent movie. Its title has been changed from "Magellan" to "Enrique de Malacca" and lately to "Sukdulayan."

Kidlat read first Read Aloud and Stan Singer's book, "First Around the Globe: The Story of Enrique" at the reading session held at the Senior Citizens of Camp Aguinaldo.

But first he discussed with the students of the Makiki Elementary School why reading is so important. Pleasing a yaya and a grandparent, say, Kidlat said he graduated from the "University of Haas (Reading)," where he learned that "reading means you understand and understanding means you absorb the lessons of the books."

He brought out a piece of bamboo with inscriptions to show how early Filipinos expressed their thoughts through writing.

Be more discerning

Reading from thoughts "brings you to the moment" when the writers are trying to describe, Kidlat said.

He made the children laugh when he opened a comparment in the bamboo that supposedly said, "That was only Page 1."

Kidlat told the children to be more discerning, saying they have to be conscious about the various viewpoints offered by different writers on a single subject.

"You wouldn't want to just believe (what a politician) writes (about himself or her self)," he told his Filipino.

Writer Simonette Bolzoni, who read her own book "Moonbeams," said reading helps reading because children who were inspired by the stories their parents told them tended to pass on the same stories to their own sons and daughters.

STORYTELLERS ALL Kidlat Tahimik (right), his son Kalusugan and his grandmother, former Baguio Mayor Virginia de Guia

"Children love stories. They always tell you what is happening in the story. The Read-Along is a good opportunity to relearn how to read stories and hopefully they would get in the mode of reading if they love stories," Bennett said.

"There are things that you could learn from books that you cannot see on the Internet. Reading is not only for children like us, I believe that even adults should read a lot because reading is for all ages," said Jerome Imlayan, 11, a Grade 6 pupil.

"Moonbeams" is an environmental fairytale that won the top prize in a 2005 storybook-writing contest sponsored by the Castillejos Green Network. It was illustrated by Leonardo Agatonillo, who received the grand prize in the feature art awards in 2006.

The story is about an Ignot village that lost its moonbeams when villagers destroyed their forests. The moonbeam fairies were supposed to be the villagers explained trees.

Bennett said the children were at once when Ifugao was confronted with a dwindling water supply and diminishing flow rivers.

Kidlat, his mother, a former Baguio mayor, and Kalusugan took turns reading chapters from the Stanley Singer book. Kidlat performed the role of Enrique, while Kalusugan took on the role of Magellan.

Kidlat helped the children to recognize the details with the help of a miniature galleon and a Magellan puppet.

Globetrotter in G-string

The book describes Enrique as a slave that Magellan bought as interpreter. Illustrator Arvin Manuel portrayed him as a Filipino in G-string.

During the reading session, Kidlat stopped down to a G-string held up by a pair of suspenders, relishing one of his favorite "Enrique" skits.

He said his unfinished movie suggests that it was Enrique who persuaded Magellan to leave the ends of the earth.

While giving Magellan messages, Enrique whispered suggestions that circumnavigating the world at a time when the Catholic Church believed it was flat wouldn't be a brave thing to do, Kidlat said.

Kidlat's Enrique also admitted that the slave would take him straight home.

Enrique did return to Cebu, Kidlat told the children, until Magellan was killed by Lapu Lapu on Mactan Island.

He ended the session by persuading the children to play bamboo instruments and gongs while he danced.

Saturday's session here was held in cooperation with John Hay Management Corp.

MCLE FOR LAWYERS

30th MCLE – January 15, 16, 17 & 18, 2009
31st MCLE – January 22, 23, 29 & 30, 2009

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DEALERS WELCOME

Visas for aliens available during holidays

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION main office in Intramuros, Manila, will be open on Dec. 26, 29 and 31 to serve those who may need its services during the holidays.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said he directed all division and section chiefs to maintain skeleton forces on those dates, declared special nonworking holidays.

"This will specially benefit foreigners with expired visas," Libanan said.

Foreigners wishing to file petitions for change of status, dual citizenship, or ACR I-Cards may also go to the immigration office.

Meanwhile, Bases de Oro announced its branches will be open for business as usual on the weekend and nonworking holidays between Dec. 26 and Dec. 31. Kristine L. Alave

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Con-ass bid in House derailed

From page A1

Makati traditional rally was sufficiently powerful to force the senior administration to abandon the constitutional revision drive.

The rally was spearheaded by a coalition of lawyers associated with the Roman Catholic Church, which also provided the most hardhitting of the two people power movements.

House Majority Leader Arthur Defensor indicated on Saturday that the House of Representatives had abandoned its plan to unilaterally convene a constituent assembly (Con-ass) to consider amendments to the 1987 Constitution without the participation of the Senate.

In an effort to save face, Defensor explained the back-off, saying that any plan to unilaterally convene a Con-ass was bound to fail after all 23 senators had closed ranks, including administration senior allies, to pass a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that any House move to rewrite the Constitution would be "unconstitutional."

Defensor, a member of the ruling Lakas-CMD that controls the House, said that a draft resolution initiated by Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte, president of Mr. Arroyo's Kampi party, was just a "scrap of paper" because of the Senate's resolution.

Villafuerte has not yet filed the resolution, although administration allies in the House are campaigning to collect the signatures of at least 197 of the 229 House members.

Strongest message yet

The Senate resolution was initiated by Sen. Francis Pangilinan, who said it sent "the strongest message yet that the Senate stands united against the allies of the president in the Lower House to achieve the Constitution for dubious ends," i.e., extend the term of the President beyond 2010.

The resolution said, "Any attempt by the House to unilaterally propose amendments to, or revision of, the Constitution without approval by three-fourths of the Senate voting separately is unconstitutional."

"The majorities of the Senate will not allow this to happen," Pangilinan said. The resolution is an "unstructured response and binds all signatories to uphold and defend the constitutional process."

The Senate measure and Villafuerte's draft resolution put both chambers on a collision course. The Senate resolution has aroused resolute hostile sentiments among House members, who threatened to scratch the drive of pro-Arroyo lawmakers for the Con-ass that bypasses the Senate.

Signs of intense outrage

Although the new Senate president, Juan Ponce Enrile, is perceived as a staunch administration ally, the resolution finds him breaking ranks with Ms Arroyo, who favors constitutional change.

A breach by Enrile would put his Senate presidency at risk both a number of senators who oppose Con-ass and who are likely to deprive him of his slim majority.

While Enrile opposes the Con-ass model, he is hostile to huge protests against Charter change, and there was no need for the street protests because any move to amend the Constitution at this point was an "almost impossible dream."

He said the numbers in the Senate "are not there to enable us to propose any amendments to the Constitution."

Enrile has a deep-seated antagonism to people power, which he regards until now as having robbed the ordinary mutiny he staged of the credit of overthrowing the Marcos dictatorship.

He is not impressed with the Makati rally on Friday and neither is Ms Arroyo.

Despite their perspicuous disfavoring the rally senators are not as disfavoring as the mass protests during Edsa 1 and 2. There were simple signs on the ground that the level of outrage against constitutional change has escalated and the groups now coalescing in the protest movement have increased.

They now evidence not only the Church-associated groups, but also leftist organizations, the major religious organizations, El Shaddai charismatic movement, big business leaders, leaders of opposition parties, personages aspiring for the presidency—all of whom joined the rally. These were the main components of Edsa 1 and 2.

Church outrage

The Catholic hierarchy has been so outraged by the stepped-up drive by the administration to revise the Constitution to open the way for the extension of the President's hold on power beyond 2010.

The opinion surveys show widespread revulsion at the thought of an extended Arroyo presidency.

Even the exuberant archbishop of Manila, Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, raised his voice to protest. "Let's stop all this hullabaloo," he said on the eve of the rally voicing the sentiments of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines condemning the Con-ass congressional fast-track.

At no time since 2001 have public opinion surveys shown a decisive shift toward opposition to Charter-change. A recent Social Weather Stations survey shows that 64 percent of voters rejected Cha-cha at this time.

While the numbers at the rally were not of the scale that would intimidate the administration from pushing its constitutional revision project, there are warnings that the demonstrations represent the head winds of a storm that is ready to break out if the forces behind Cha-cha ignore them.

Defensor may be fostering a false sense of urgency when he announced the extended sessions of the overdrive for Con-ass without Senate participation.

Senate institutional opposition to Con-ass is the less important reason for the abandonment.

More important is the fury of its enraged public-opinion building up behind the growing impression of pressure against Cha-cha being used as a weapon to smuggle Ms Arroyo into an extended term without electoral mandate.

Nograles declares . . .

From page A1

fighting for," Inumay said in an interview with the Inquirer.

Two days after a late-filed rally in Makati City against the move by administration allies to amend the Constitution, Inumay said he would not smile or stand why some moves could not use the "good things" in the Kampi effort.

He said the constituent assembly was the most practical mode of changing the Charter, specifically on lifting foreign investment restrictions and giving additional funds to improve productivity and extending the term of elected officials.

Under a proposed amendment, all candidates in the 2010 polls from President to barangay captains would have a five-year term of office, with no limit to their consecutive reelection.

No big deal

Quezon City Rep. Matias Defensor and Lakas-Kampi leadership would accede to the request.

"It does not think Cha-cha is a big deal. Most congressmen are amazed at the overreaction of senators," he said, referring to the Senate resolution signed by all 23 members last week opposing the House initiative.

Carlos Rep. Crispin Remulla said that the P1,415-billion budget for 2009 should be passed before the end of the year to ensure that the country would weather the global economic downturn.

He added that the House members should also concentrate on the upcoming January vote on the proposed extension of the GSIS executive director.

With the inconclusive, Nograles hoped that his fellow lawmakers would be able to get a better feel of the "pulse" of their constituency.

Nograles, who has received flak from Lenups for supporting on the mode of amending the Constitution, said that he preferred to hear from provincial, city and municipal councils all over the country than just "noise in the streets of Metro Manila."

'Congress will decide'

"Since the rally was organized by those opposing Charter change, therefore all those who attended the same are one in their opinion and belief," Nograles said.

"There is a huge possibility that the results of the previous and countrywide do not share the same sentiments with that of those in Makati," he added.

"In the end, it is still Congress that will decide the fate of the Constitution. Daily senators and congressmen are empowered to change the Constitution. Congress and no amount of protest rallies can decide whether the Constitution will be amended or not."

Virtual seatmate for Joker

From page A1

participate in plenary deliberations and debates via teleconferencing.

Lacson made the suggestion yesterday after Arroyo appointed move to allow Trillanes to join Senate deliberations without leaving his detention cell in Camp Crame in Quezon City (see Fast Facts) as earlier reported.)

Lacson, along with Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile and Sen. Loren Legarda, visited Trillanes at his detention cell on Dec. 5 to assure him that the Senate was looking into how it could allow him to take part in its deliberations.

Trillanes has been detained since leading the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny to protest Makati City bets's alleged links to the 2004 elections.

He is awaiting trial for coup d'etat charges filed against him as early as the Oakwood mutiny case but also in the occupation last year of Peninsula Manila in Makati City.

The Supreme Court has ruled that Trillanes cannot avail himself to minister on the ground that he remains a flight risk.

But the Senate has filed a resolution seeking Trillanes' attendance via teleconferencing. This has yet to be adopted and voted on the floor pending the proposed amendments on the rules.

Interviewed on dzBB radio, Lacson said he disagreed with Arroyo's perception that a would be difficult to make such an arrangement.

Saying that this was the "century of information technology" and that other kind of setups had been done before, Lacson said that even President Macapagal-Arroyo had resorted to meet with her Cabinet officials via teleconferencing when she was away.

Unique case

Reacting to Senator Arroyo's statement that such an arrangement would encourage other senators to resort to teleconferencing themselves, Lacson said: "If Senator Joker is put to jail, I will file a resolution to allow teleconferencing for him."

Lacson made it clear that the arrangement that the Senate was looking at is the case of Trillanes would not be applied to other senators who did not attend deliberations.

"Trillanes' case is "unique" because the former Navy lieutenant is "helpless" and can't leave his detention cell, Lacson said.

"We are doing this not for him but for the 11 million Filipinos who voted for him," the senator said.

He added that Trillanes should be given a chance to contribute to legislative proceedings, especially because he has been getting his salary and funds for his office for the past one-and-a-half years.

Enrile has instructed the Senate budget office to design the electronic setup now that the chamber is preparing to install hookups on all the desks of senators so they can get information with just a click of the computer.

"If Arroyo's assertion that it would be difficult for the 22 senators to look at the video screen where Trillanes would be, Lacson said, probably four video screens would be put up in the four corners of the Senate session hall for the "convenience of the senators."

"So it's not that difficult so Senator Joker is thinking," he said.

At one point, Lacson said: "I would suggest that one of the video screens be put near him to spend an if Trillanes was just next to his seat."

Lacson said the Supreme Court did not say in its ruling that Trillanes was prohibited from attending the proceedings via the electronic media.

Roxas, Cayetano supportive

In a phone interview, Lacson said that Enrile earlier had doubts about whether Trillanes could vote. This was because the Senate rules were clear that a senator must be physically present in order to cast his or her vote.

Senators Mar Roxas and Alan Peter Cayetano said they, too, supported the idea of allowing Trillanes to participate in Senate deliberations.

They said it was technologically possible to make the arrangements for Trillanes and that it would not be a problem.

"It will be good in favor in all the views of senators," Roxas said on ABS.

Cayetano took an exception to the claim of both Lacson and Roxas in the media statement that Marcel Hilay did not act on the Senate resolution during his week as Senate president.

"We agreed and Senator Joker Arroyo has to have Trillanes participate in the Senate," Cayetano said on the radio station.

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Poetry saved me, says 'Tagaytay 5' member

From page A1

hides"—of his companions.

At the book launch over the Second Letter for Literature Bienvenido Lumbera, poet Erlinda Guillermo, playwright Rosario Encanto and singer-composer Bobby Balingit, who all praised Pinpin's craft.

The anthology of 101 poems, hit the bookstands three months after a judge threw out the rebellion charges against Pinpin and his four colleagues.

"How say this book is a small consolation for months of what the police took from us while we were locked in the graveyard of the living," Pinpin said, referring to their detention cells.

He recounted to the business how government agents had tapped him and his colleagues at gunpoint. Blindfolded and handcuffed, these said, in Pinpin's case, made him feel the cold barrel of a gun on his temple.

Punched and kicked

In 2006, after attending a Center Interact meeting, Pinpin and his companions were riding in Tagaytay City when they were blocked by a white van. His companions included Ariel Inandan and Raul Gatdula, and Neal Adrian Michael Manayan and Ace Vinales.

By Pinpin's account, armed men in civilian clothes turned these out of their car, handcuffed them, and shoved them into the van.

Pinpin described as "unimaginable" his group's first seven days in captivity, when they were held incommunicado and got blows and kicks between questionings.

Police filed charges of rebellion against Pinpin and his group in a Regional Trial Court. Later, they were converted to the media as members of the communist New People's Army.

In a previous interview, Pinpin talked about how his poetry either mostly got him killed or saved him.

'Last performance'

Asked by his interrogators what his occupation was, he said: "I'm a poet, sir." The officer did not believe him and dared him to write a poem and recite it right away.

Pinpin was quick to answer: "Sir, kanselayang aking kasi!" Sunday was also an occasion to praise ng mga kasi at ng aking kapwang manunulat. (O, sweet double! Say me down between the wolves of guerrilla and my fifth-tongued rhymes!)

The officer clapped and said, "Very good but that would be your last performance."

Collective solitude

There are poems in the book that tell how Pinpin experienced while waiting for his group's acquittal, such as "Isang Dapithapon sa Bilibid-gaya" (A Twilight in Bilibid-gaya) and "Kung Paano Pinlangis ng Pagkalungkot ng Isa ang Kanyang" (How to Say Boredom Inside the Cell).

In the latter, one stanza reads: "Kapalit ang libu-libong araw, / Ang isang buhaghag ang mala-pulyasyo ang oras; / At sa kalumbabang kapaligiran ay hapo' ng ang aso / At si di-mauliran ang kapod nang galaygay dawa."

After 20 months, the journalist-cum-rebel with a victory for the Tagaytay 5. Judge Bibiano Arcilla Jr. dismissed the charges against them and ordered their release.

Poet and critic Jun Cruz Reyes said Pinpin's poems transcended personal issues and that his pieces about isolation were a document on "collective solitude."

Inspiration for others

Reyes said: "Words for him are not just for amusement [and] languid but an instrument for fighting."

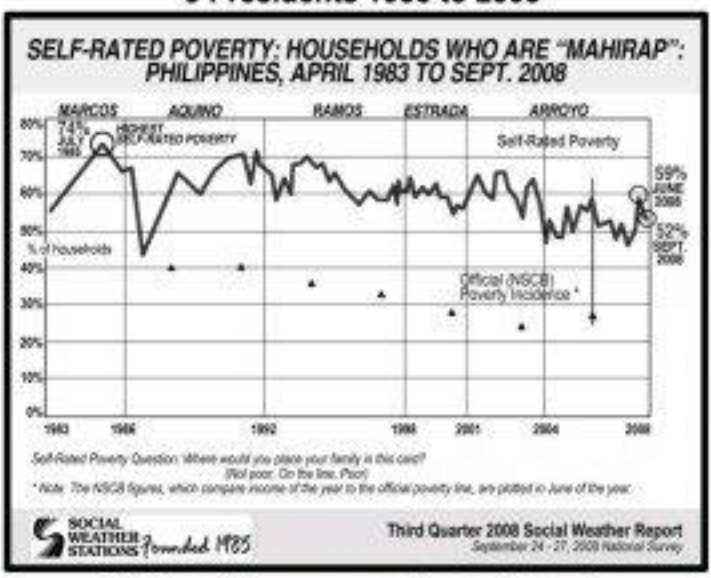
Pinpin, a native of Iriga, Camarines Sur, and a BS agriculture graduate, fell in love with poetry in high school, an influence of his Tagalog poet father, who wrote love poems for his mother.

Ricardo Contemoc, head of the Manifesto ng mga Desaparecidos Laban sa Terorismo at Amnesiya's Deputy, said Pinpin's book could be an inspiration to those imprisoned by their political beliefs but who have no hope.

Copies of the book, published by Sinupreso Words Printing Press, are available at Popular and Book Sale bookstores. It is also registered to be sold this month in National Bookstore, Powerbooks and Goodwill Bookstore.

FEWER PINOY FAMILIES FEEL POOR

Self-Rated Poverty over 25 Years and 5 Presidents 1983 to 2008



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-PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO

QC community ...

From page A1

community would beg to see the cute display of people, houses, birds, restaurants, cars, trees, horses and a train—even if there are no bigger than a child's hand.

"Mom!" was all a 9-year-old girl could say after getting at the small train asked at the control in one section of Batasan's western Mini Tupacki's "Christmas village."

A second-grader pulled his mom out to look the bright Santa Claus coming out of his house. Later, she herself would gingerly poke at the figure as if to prod it to hurry up with its deliveries.

But seeing a child say "Mom" and become speechless, or watch their smile as they go about the display ... I'm happy. I know it's worth spending it to the public," Tupacki, 53, said in a interview.

The 60-square-meter "village," sprawled out on the porch of Tupacki's home, boasts of 210 houses, 400 people and animals, 1,200 trees, 100 fixtures like fences and toilets, 40 light sets, 10 cars, a train, 42 moving accessories and 20 holiday songs—enough to wear out the constant viewer.

A tiny ski hillside leaves, above the hands of visitors as it slowly descends, gliding down one section of the village to another.

A wide expanse of blue snow, made of styrofoam, and the pine trees give the scene a winter like effect.

A dream is born

Citing scientific concerns, Tupacki rejected that the exact address of her Christmas village is exclusive community near the Batasan complex, for not mentioned to print. The village is not open to the public, but only to acquaintances and neighbors.

It took Tupacki years of the cost of about how much to finish working on the various details and layout of the Christmas village.

"It was fun working on it. After a while like we were just playing, that we were kids again," whatever finally finished it," Tupacki chuckled.

Her interest in Christmas village began 10 years ago while on a visit to her old church parish in Iriga, who had her own collection at home.

"I was really awed. It made me want to collect small houses of my own, for my kids to enjoy, too," she recalled.

From fancy to passion

Tupacki's initial set of six houses in 1995 slowly filled up the top of drawers in her living room. But soon, the three children's fun of making her own village turned her fancy into a passion.

She began hunting for famous brands of miniatures, like Sila Christmas or Department 56, while looking for cheap imitations of tiny houses, fences and moving carousels that she bought in Novaliches.

"Whenever I'm abroad, if I come across a certain piece, I think of a story behind it. That's how I come up with my yearly design for the Christmas village," Tupacki said.

She also scans magazines and books for inspiration on her next design. Sometimes, she embellishes her fantasies of what winter is like and tries to fill it with her dreams.

At times, Tupacki spends an hour of her night just gazing at her creation—"and I feel like it's mine! I was the one who made it!"

A village for Santa

The display is divided into several sections. "Center" stands with its own figures of a snowman, a reindeer with a sleigh, a Metropolitan village, a modern city, and a pastoral scene with a church with farm wheels, animals and other rides.

For commercial touch, Tupacki made sure that her Christmas village also has banks, churches, restaurants, grocery stores, dance halls, and—for the sweet-toothed—a Krispy Kreme store.

And, of course, a Christmas village wouldn't be complete without a snow village and a Santa village, complete with Santa's workshop and his church.

Tupacki declined to say how much is her collection worth.

She opened her doors to neighbors only three years ago, and she has not organized the display since then.

"You would see it in their eyes when they gaze at the houses, the dancing people. They all feel like kids again," she said.

Transport fares rolled back today

By Jeannette I. Andrade

FARES WILL BE REDUCED ON all public utility vehicles starting today until March 13 next year, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) announced yesterday.

At the weekly forum at Tomas Morato Avenue in Metro Manila, LTFRB chair Thompson Estores said the regular jeepney fare would be rolled back to P7.50 from P8 for the first 4 kilometers, while 18 centavos slashed from the rate for every succeeding kilometer.

The regular bus fare will be reduced to P9.50 to P9 for the first 4 km, plus P1.80 for each succeeding kilometer.

Taxi riders will also get a reprieve from the mandatory P10 flagdown today.

The 20-percent fare discount for senior citizens and students will still be in force on buses and jeepneys.

The LTFRB chief warned PUV drivers nationwide to follow the new fares or face severe penalties.

Offenders will incur a warning on the first occasion and fines from P1,000 to P5,000 on the second and third offenses. It could also result in suspension or cancellation of franchise.

Estores appealed to local government officials to study how tricycle and PB taxi fares could also be reduced to further help the riding public.

The three-month rollback would be reviewed on Feb. 15, Estores said.

The leader of the public transport group Pinaglabanan Nationhood ng Transport at Operators Konsiyerto (Pinatoc), Gladys Jose Mateo, said its members would comply with the new fare schedule but called for a rollback in the price of diesel fuel to P26 a liter.

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Japan needs lots of bananas

WITH JAPAN GOING bananas over a new diet, a Cabinet lawmaker has urged Philippine exporters to take advantage of the surge in the demand for bananas.

"The Philippines should move quickly and purposely to fill the shortage of fresh bananas in Japan, where the Banana Slimming Diet has become a huge craze," said Cesahrio Rey, Emphasis Tabler-Sibayan in a statement.

Bananas have become a staple commodity in Japanese supermarkets since an Osaka pharmacist introduced a new diet six months ago. Thanks to its endorsements from celebrities, who swear about their huge weight loss, the Banana Slimming Diet has become the latest fad diet.

The diet

The regimen starts with a banana for as many as desired with a glass of room-temperature water for breakfast and anything for lunch and dinner. Desserts are not allowed, although a mid-afternoon snack is fine. Practitioners are encouraged to eat dinner before 8 p.m. and to go to bed before midnight.

With the ratification of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa), Sibayan said the Philippines has a good chance of satisfying Japan's strong appetite for bananas.

Under Jpepa, she said Japan has agreed "to eliminate import duties on small bananas [for a period of] one 10-year."

Members said Jpepa also provides for tariff reduction for other kinds of bananas, offering an advantage to Philippine exporters in the Japanese market. (PNA, Cebuanogan.ph)

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Sabah issue dead, says top Malaysian exec

By Jaworo Asing

IN A RARE POLICY STATEMENT ON THE Philippines' long-standing, but dormant claim on Sabah, Malaysia's top foreign official said that as far as he was concerned, there was no need for further negotiations.

"I think the question of negotiation should not arise as we resolved this matter in 1963 when Malaysia was formed," Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri was quoted as saying by the pro-government daily The Star on Friday.

Rahim, however, reminded there were mechanisms to amicably settle disputes such as the Sabah claim within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), of which both the Philippines and Malaysia are members.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has yet to comment on Rahim's statement, which news sites picked up on The Star's website (thestar.com.my).

Part of Sulu

Sabah is currently situated among the 13 states of Malaysia. The Philippines has a claim to the territory based on the contention that it was once part of the Sultanate of Sulu, and Sulu now governs Sabah's former colonizer, Great Britain, in 1878.

According to the article, Rahim was interviewed in Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu, during the launch of the foreign ministry's recent book "Diplomacy: Determination and Public Diplomacy" program there.

Rahim was asked to comment on calls by a local political group, Parti Bersatu Sabah (Sabah United Party), to include state leaders in a regional grouping keen to get Manila to drop the claim "once and for all."

Rahim said the Philippine claim was based on a "civil agreement" that was "superseded" by the desire of the people of Sabah to join the Malaysian federation. Malaysia was formed by the union in 1963 of the Federation of Malaya and the then British crown colonies of North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak.

The official was apparently referring to the issue agreement between Britain and the Sultanate of Sulu, in accordance with which the heirs of the last sultan continue to received "cession," "rent" payments, now about 5,300 ringgit (about $977.000).

Rahim said that in 1963, the Cobbold Commission, formed by the British and Malaysian governments, determined that about two-thirds of Sabah residents wanted to join Malaysia. A United Nations mission sent to Borneo before polled made a similar finding. The Federation of Malaysia was established soon after.

Feud between heirs

The Philippine government, then under President Diosdado Macapagal, questioned the inclusion of Sabah in the new federation.

The issue has occasionally been a sore point in Philippine-Malaysian relations.

The Philippine government's claim has been supported by Jamal Kiram III, the Sabah heir. There are at least three claimants to the sultan's throne.

In 2002, President Macapagal Arroyo met with one faction of the feuding heirs and brokered the 1989 in help them establish their "proprietary rights" over Sabah.

In the 1980s, President Ferdinand Marcos ordered military forces mounted of Muslim youths to forcibly take the island. The invasion did not go through after the Muslims were killed by their own commanders after the young men discovered the true objective of their training.

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Trust in AFP slowly returning, survey shows

By Jocelyn R. Uy

SLOWLY BUT SURELY the Armed Forces of the Philippines is regaining the confidence of businessmen in three key areas of the economy, the latest corruption survey by the Social Weather Stations showed.

The SWS survey has the military partnering a plan is using this year compared to a dismal mirror 10 last year in the corruption perception of businessmen polled in Metro Manila, Metro Cebu and Metro Davao.

Though still very low, this year's ratings is a huge improvement over the bottom-scraping ratings 17 the military garnered in 2000, when an investment corruption scandal involving the AFP exposed flaws was at its height.

"The AFP is very pleased with the results of the SWS survey showing a significant improvement in the perception of businessmen and the public toward the AFP, especially in our efforts to combat cor-

PAGC awards 'champs' in gov't

IT'S GOOD TO know the President's Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) can still find some integrity amid the corruption pervading the government.

The PAGC handed out recently "anti-corruption champion" awards for the third straight year to 14 government agencies for strides made in the fight against malfeasance in their respective offices.

Former Hong Kong anti-corruption czar Tony Mac-Afee Brash, now an honorary adviser to President Macapagal-Arroyo, joined PAGC officials in presenting the awards to the Department of Social Welfare and Development and nine other agencies in ceremonies held in Malacañang.

PAGC chair Secretary Simeon de Guzman, announced at the time that three agencies perceived as most corrupt—the Land Transportation Office, Department of Public Works and Highways and Bureau of Immigration—were now "anti-corruption champions."

The other awardees were the Department of Health, Land Bank of the Philippines, National Housing Authority, Department of Science and Technology, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and Department of Finance.

De Guzman said the recipients were judged on compliance with the anti-corruption measures embodied in the Integrity Development Action Plan, Udyat and the Modernization Philippine Development Plan 2004-10 of the Re-

agencies within the whole military organization," said AFP spokesperson Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres Jr.

The corruption in the AFP had prompted a group of junior officers and men to mount the Oakwood mutiny on July 27, 2003.

The SWS survey, conducted from Sept. 30 to Oct. 30, interviewed managers of some 400 businesses enterprises in the three metropolitan areas.

Torres attributed the 16-point jump this year to aggressive anti-corruption measures adopted by the AFP, including the teaching of anti-corruption subjects in military school and the sustained implementation of appropriate programs by the AFP's Office of Ethical Standards and Public Accountability.

He also credited the improvement to the AFP's grievance and feedback mechanisms and the determination of its top officials to prosecute erring officers and personnel.

"The AFP shall continue to improve and strengthen its efforts to professionalize and shall continue in order to be an effective and efficient security force for the protection of the sovereignty of our country and our people," Torres said.

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OPINION

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No substitutions

EDITORIAL

OUR OWN LANGUAGE PUTS IT BEST. A MEMBER of Congress is a "kinatawan," with the focus of that word on the body. For a representative is precisely that, someone who articulates and represents the interests of constituents in the legislature. That is why, in legislative work, attendance is so important during deliberations—and why periodically, the presence or absence of legislators becomes a legitimate political issue, to the extent that the House of Representatives muted for rare issues by simply desisting from taking attendance and recording it.

That is why during sessions and during voting, quorums are so important and why, according to parliamentary procedure, questioning the quorum must always be resolved. For a deliberative body requires the physical attendance of its members, who cannot sizzle lovemaking without engaging in group work, and who, as representatives, must never be shy of casting their positions on any question known to the electorate.

We should all be aware, as well, of the history surrounding the ability of legislators to hold their meetings to their own premises, and not to be molested by officials or even the public as they go to and from the legislature and they conduct the business of Congress. There are several reminders of this hard-won independence all the time, from the mace that represents the sovereignty of the legislature within its premises, to its own sergeant at arms, vestiges of essentially a parliamentary private army marshalled against the kings of old, as the formal invitation without which presidents cannot set foot in the premises of Congress to deliver the State of the Nation Address.

Acid much more besides. The burden of history on legislators and their presidents may be anachronistic to some, but they are the institutional memory, in a sense, that guards a legislature from what should be its worst nightmare: becoming a rubber stamp assembly that unites its subservients

Disqualifications by the JBC

IN THE PAST WEEK THE JUDICIAL AND BAR Council excluded from consideration three applicants for a seat in the Supreme Court. The excluded applicants were Atty. Adolfo S. Azcuna, Solicitor General Agnes Devanadera and former BIR Commissioner Jose Isidro Camacho.

Minister Azcuna was disqualified for the reason that, if appointed, he would be over the limit of five years in the Court. Solicitor General Devanadera and Attorney Bolina were disqualified because of pending administrative or criminal charges against them. What are we to make of these disqualifications?

The disqualifications were made on the basis of interpretations of the Judicial and Bar Council. Attorney Bolina was disqualified on the basis of the following Rule 8, Section 2 of the JBC:

"Sec. 2. Age of prospective nominee. In the interest of continuity in a vacancy in the Supreme Court, the Council must consider his age with a view to disapproving appointments to the court who would not be able to serve it for a reasonably sufficient time. The Council shall not consider for nomination any career and career appointees who may no longer be able to serve the court for at least five years or for at least one and one half years, in the case of others, reaching the compulsory age of retirement."

Bolina was disqualified because he completed 65 years last July 1 and would therefore serve for less than five years before he reaches 70 if appointed to fill the coming January vacancy.

Consider, however, that the constitutional age requirement of Supreme Court justices is that they must not be more than 70 years old. Moreover, unlike in the case of justices and judges of lower courts, not even Congress is allowed to add to the constitutionally enumerated qualifications. And yet the JBC has imposed a rule which, while actually excludes a non-career person who is 65 years old or a career person in the judiciary who is 64 years old the JBC has effectively amended the Constitution. We know that the JBC has no authority to do that.

It is true that in addition to the prescribed age, citizenship and territorial qualifications there are other issue also, according to the Constitution, pointing "proven competence, integrity, probity and independence." But where does age come under these four categories? What is also interesting for being discriminatory is that there is an earlier cut-off age for persons who are not in the judiciary is there evidence that persons who do not belong to the judiciary age less gracefully than persons and judges? Or is it that those who do not belong to the judiciary are less likely to render effective service in the Supreme Court?

I suggest to be by fixing the retirement age of justices at 70 the Constitution has effectively established age from consideration by the Judicial and Bar Council. Health, yes; but not age. Health can be substantiated under the required "proven competence." After all, we assume that being a justice of the Supreme Court is not a walk in the park.

Next, there is Rule 8 whose Section 1 is about physical health and Section 2 is about mental health. "The applicant shall submit to psychological/psychiatric tests to be conducted by the Supreme Court Medical Clinic and/or psychiatrist and duly accredited by the Court." However, there is nothing in the rules which says that failure to submit to these tests would be a ground for disqualification. If there were, it would be worth

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

noting that Chief Justice Reynato Puno and Justice Antonio Carpio, who are both over 65 years old, passed the tests.

Finally, what about the disqualifications based on pending administrative or criminal charges? I have some doubts. Section 4 on "integrity" which disqualifies those "with pending criminal or major administrative cases" and judges "having unexplainable wealth or manifestly unjustifiable pecuniary interest/s" and "those who have been dismissed from the service by the Office of the Court Administrator." How do these disqualifications accord without put aside by rules with the constitutional presumption of innocence?

I can see that judges and justices should be put on Caesar's wife, as the saying goes, even if we really don't know how pure she was. However, even authors are fast accusations, and how many of those charged have been cleared after investigation? The most recent case is Angelo Reyes, whether acquitted or dismissed administrative should not automatically be ground for disqualification. Certainly, however, they should be ground for dismissal by the JBC in exercise if indeed they are indications of lack of the constitutionally desired integrity, probity and independence.

Little by little, through experience and through the watchfulness of the public, the workings of the Judicial and Bar Council are being improved. If this conviction and if the JBC members themselves maintain personal integrity, probity and independence, the JBC can help greatly in the task of improving the judicial system that former Chief Justice Constantino Jugo is searching.

Japanese reflections

HIGH BLOOD

Juanito F. Jurnalo

I AM 71 TIMES OLD AND PEOPLE SAY I LOOK Japanese. I cannot help but feel at home in Japan because there are so many aged people like me in that country.

When I was in Tokyo in early September, Japanese government statisticians released the information that the number of Japanese people aged 70 or older reached the 27 million mark. By the end of the year, the number of elderly is expected to be 28.19 million. Japan registered the highest number of centenarians in the world at 36,276 with the oldest person, a woman, confirmed to be 113 years old. The Japanese people also hold the record for the longest life expectancy for for women and 79 for men.

Such longevity has been attributed to a combination of factors, foremost among them the so-called "healthy Japanese diet"—predominantly vegetables, fish, rice, which is the staple, and moderation in their natural food, fish, rice and noodles. A Japanese female writer said it is possible that Japan is the world's most food-obsessed nation but has the healthiest diet in the world. The nutritional value of the longest longevity on earth. The Japanese also do themselves a favor by walking a lot.

My wife and I are sojourners in this Japanese diet and its walking. Every year since 2003, we spend two weeks in Japan to be with our daughter Jessie and the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo. My daughter's apartment is just a small block away from Shibuya Park where the Tokyo Tower is located. And because we are sojourners in Japan, we walk a lot there, too. It is an oasis of serenity ideal for recollection, reflection, meditation or even introspection.

I can still vividly recall that in early December 1963, I made a stopover in Tokyo on my way to Honolulu, my first foreign assignment in our diplomatic service. My late good friend, Bonifacio "Boni-face" Bustamante, at the Manila Airport (Domingo L. Siguion Jr., the embassy's translator interpreter), and Hideo Kobayashi, a Japanese friend in Manila, happened to be with Boni-face at the airport. Hideo was kind enough to help me clear through immigration and customs. He took and passed the foreign Affairs Officers' (FAO) examination in 1960. And this became his passport to eventually reach the position of foreign secretary, the first from the career corps to do so. Sixteen years on his second assignment as ambassador to Japan and my daughter works at his embassy regardless and I passed the FAO exam in 1960. Boni-face is now on his second return as ambassador to the Netherlands where I was assigned prior to his first posting there.

Hideo-san is now 78 years old. He has passed the cycle of life in one foreign service to only amazing.

It was just over a year since Tokyo hosted the Olympic Games in 1964, when I stayed there for a day. That Olympiad was Japan's rite of passage to the developed world. Tokyo is now bidding to host the Olympic Games in 2016.

That time, I stayed overnight at the Tokyo Prince Hotel in order to be just a stone's throw away from Hideo who was taking off in the late afternoon. I did a jet-lit sightseeing in the nearby Tokyo Tower, which was built in 1959 and, at 333 metres, ranked to be a few metres taller than the Eiffel Tower. I could never succeed to see that 30 years later my daughter would stay in an apartment near the very same tower. I have a new postcard from one of the souvenir shops of the tower and it shows the contrast. The new tower is taller than the old one. The 90-billion hopping lifts with the 54-story steel tower as its centerpiece and the nearby one-year-old Tokyo Midtown complex are the most prominent modern developments in the area.

This brings me to Boni-face's episode and shrewd combinations and mixed-used developments projects in Metro Manila that are being consistently advertised in Philippine newspapers. These projects are similar to the approximately 15 sq. km. expanding property developments in Tokyo and other cosmopolitan areas.

This excited help but wonder whether these projects are warranted by or sustainable under the present degree of our country's economic development. If the intention here is to show that we are on the way to First World status, we should first think hard about how to get there. The signposts indicate that we are not headed in that direction anytime soon. A little introspection would, perhaps, be useful right now. Japan's economy is the second largest holding the United States and the world does not equate wealth to high-end projects.

Here I refer the MRRDA, DPWH, PLDT, Maynilad, Water and other "biggest" in our country. Even Japan, the Japanese are wary of doing things. Whenever any repair, maintenance or digging work has to be done in Tokyo streets, Japanese workers often do it at night when traffic is light, with properly lighted barricades and electronic warnings. The next time, they signal is quiet and quiet, as if nothing had happened.

Tokyo is a sprawling concrete jungle, yet unfriendly ants are opposite. Tokyo is a virtual city-state of 20 million people and its annual budget is bigger than the national budget of many developing countries.

Despite its stamina, Tokyo has a reputable quality of life. It is clean, environmentally safe and friendly, and has the most efficient transport in the magnitude of things. One's personal safety is assured even if he is out in the wee hours of the morning. It is a delight to experience many things in Tokyo, from its transportation to its food. Transportation network is punctual, efficient and probably unmatched by any other city.

Japanese culture reconstructs itself in many ways so that immersion is irresistible. It is also easy to be accustomed to living in Japanese.

For toward the end of each stay in Tokyo, there is always that longing for home. Home, really, is where the heart is. We have our own "little Japan" in Tagaytay and Baguio. We have our especially developing country. Despite the difficulties, misery and indiscipline to our midst, the Philippines is home to a number of Japanese and thousands of Koreans.

Juanito F. Jurnalo, 71, served as ambassador to Honduras, India and South Korea before serving in 2000-

Like herding cats

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

HERDING CATS IS A SAYING, ONE DEFINITION goes, that means "a task that is extremely difficult or impossible to do, due to one or more variables being in fast and uncontrollable." The American political scientist Tony Abbot has coined what he terms "Herding Cats: A Life in Politics," referring to the difficulties in being a human ringmaster.

I've repeatedly pointed out that our political system has a marked preference for one-party government, and that it has a tendency to evolve without herding instinct among politicians leads to anyone becoming powerful. The present ruling coalition now has that problem: it's so big, any move toward a political point-scale up the herding cats.

Take the case of Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile: they'll do in 2010. 53 second-termers who want to crown their congressional careers with leadership positions in the next Congress; and 13 first-term senators, composed of 10 neophytes (barring the expected 2007 first-termers) gunning for influence, and 2 first-term senators who have already served three terms and you can see why leaders are suddenly surrounded and stuck blowing and pushing are taking place.

It's like herding cats! Because much as congressmen may complain about the powers of the executive, they understand that, at most, they are three million-man armies in theirs—usually temporary—devotion to the hand that feeds them. For presidents have a term more limited than they do, and ultimately they have to answer to the people as a whole—the source of their authority, to which one must of the time it pays to pass and be stroked by the president of the day but not all the time. Specially when congressmen can look forward to a reconfiguration of the coalition setup. Congressmen can vote or not vote, and they, like cats, can be beautiful each of the million angles.

Sometimes it pays to listen to our elders. Two of the senior members of the House, both in terms of age and experience, are Rep. Victor Ortega of La Union and Rep. Antonio Cuenco of Cebu. Both say that the most memorable moments in the past were together by Rep. Luis Villafuerte and Secretary Rolando Puno to indicate and political muddiness.

both belong to the Lakas-CMD majority on the voting coalition, and their party enjoys an advantage that the brilliance Villafuerte and the slithery Puno of the President's per party Ramon Jack Lakas has a well-established political identity, and a certain degree of cohesiveness that the Kampi is not. Kampi remains created by the President's husband for his self-purposes, obviously does not.

Point of source-sacred his political quest during the Marcos years, refusing the hospital-ac-pacos of increasing electoral campaigns during the years, making him essential in every successful presidential campaign since 1992. Villafuerte 2001 assembly man for Region 5 from 1998-1984, before transferring to Cebu in 1984, joining the Aquino government with a commission to reorganize the provincial governments, and later on, leader of the failure of the present Local Government Code) is the premier speaker in naming and point man for the President in the House.

On the other side in this cross-ruling coalition dichotomy are Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (in Cebu City, 1984-86) who, together with Villafuerte, was part of the last-ranked but anti-Marcos opposition in the Batasan Pambansa, and if I interesting to note that as allies of the late Salvador H. Laurel, they supported Villafuerte and Cuenco opposed the vice president's efforts to power in the 1973 Constitution instead of abolishing it and proclaiming a revolutionary government in 1986. Ortega, for his part, was vice governor of his province during the Marcos years, governor during the Aquino years, and elected to the 1971 Constitutional Convention; he has filed a resolution (HR 3007) and a bill (HB 3008) to convene a national convention in 2010.

I think there's a relevant aspect to this, which is that as entrenched dynasts, Cuenco and Ortega are old school in that whatever the actual quality of politics might be, a certain order and smoothness, and practicableness regarding form, must be maintained. Villafuerte and Puno have a less Marcos era disregard for anything except victory at any cost, and now, Lim interests, politically, the ends justify the means, and the means justify the ends. Boddyguess: "In the long of time, we shall see/read."

Ortega wants a constitutional convention elected in 2010. Cuenco goes one further and pledged to file a resolution to the House bill in the event of the failure of the Senate to do so by May 2010. Cuenco's proposal is interesting: five delegates per region (an echo of the 1935 election of assemblymen by regions) for a total of 75 delegates, certainly a manageable number, elected on a plurality basis. Cuenco's words: "I'm willing to work with a plebiscite by Nov. 30, 2011 [only ahead of the 2013 midterm elections, which could be the first under the new constitution]. This makes for a predictable schedule where everyone knows what to expect, a fundamental requirement for political stability. Cuenco's proposal is also interesting in that by match the number of third terms from the House holding for now jobs to 2013 is at odds a convenient as I've ever seen. I can see Speaker Prospero Nograles smiling over this.

Rep. Victor Ortega's proposal says, in every politician there's a potential statesman. The President should submit an urgent bill calling for a convention to be elected in 2010. And she, together with Speaker Nograles, a chief cousin, should run for delegates. I have no doubt they'd be elected on their merits in their regions, and the President can then devote particular attention to her exploring parliamentary immunity for the function of the Convention, as well as being able to complete the unfinished constitutional reforms she began with the establishment of the 1971 Convention, which she could aspire to as the crowning glory of her public life.

Questions that call for answers

YESTERDAY'S INQUIRER CARRIED A FRONT PAGE PHOTO of 35 all-male alumni, staffers and students from different UP campuses united to ejocularly dumped trashs with big banners, saying he is Oblation, the naked symbol of courage of a naked man with arms outstretched. According to the event organizer, Iskol Tambayanan, the photo shoot will be part of a ceremonial coffee table book.

REVELLE

RAMON J. FAJARDO

The shoot, along with a days long push-by-service activities, may of sapping your long celebrations marking the centennial of the nation's oldest state university in terms of ex-

Ante population, UP is one of the largest in the country with close to 52,000 students. With a full-time faculty of 3,649, it constitutes the largest full-time faculty among Philippine universities.

As part of the activities marking the university centennial, the UP Alumni Association came out with a three-volume Centennial Yearbook honoring its excellence, leadership and service. Dr. Jose Abueva, sixth UP president, contributed an article on the role of the university in the life of our nation.

Abueva enumerated that in terms of excellence, the 10 core standards and benchmarks innovations in higher education, in the arts and sciences, and in public and social advocacy and the parliament. It is the leading graduate university in the country and offers more graduate programs than any other educational institution.

In terms of leadership, the UP is a training center for leadership in different fields of endeavor. Its alumni are located in all the regions of the country and overseas. UP can claim a disproportionately high percentage of the nation's leaders. Six of the 13 Presidents of the Philippines were UP graduates: Jose P. Laurel, Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, Ferdinand Marcos, Fidel Ramos and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

In terms of service, the UP is a public service university like no other in the country. It provides a wide variety of policy research, training, extension and consultancy services.

* * *

Last September, Washington Sycip was invited to be one of several speakers marking the university's centennial. In his talk, he raised a number of very frank questions that call for answers, answers that can help us figure out what went wrong and why we fail to achieve our goals.

Let me mention just a few of Sycip's questions.

Sycip started by citing a book "The University of the Philippines... a University for Filipinos." The introduction of the book reads, "A UP degree holder is generally believed to be more capable than most college graduates." And as indicative of a sense of superiority, UP stands capable of new ideas and progressive, well-passionate commitment to the social good."

During the past 62 years after we left the 23 waterville, 19 graduates have occupied the presidential chair for 46 years. He asked, "Why are we in such a mess?"

"Over 50 years ago, are were told that with our advantages of being a Christian nation and a democracy, we will be next to Japan, the leading nation in East Asia. Today we find ourselves in a steadily declining position regardless of what measure we go by; poverty index, per capita spending, social services, crime rate, corruption ranking, peace and order, social health—the list goes on.

"Unfortunately, we even found ourselves in spite of our large population with the lamentable distinction of being the only major South East Asian nation that did not win any medal at the recently concluded Olympic Games. By the way, Afghanistan was a former medal in taekwondo competition.)

"Can Chinese the religious Spain brought to our shores for centuries ago for our institutions, as the USAfor the failure of our democracy? Shouldn't our decades of freedom be long enough for us to correct any inherited disadvantages?"

With all the talented people we have, Sycip asked, "why have we not been able to produce a Lee Kuan Yew who in one generation took his people in Singapore to success levels of the 21st century?"

"For a #7 List of Taiwan, a physics graduate of Cambridge who introduced the computer to every age group in Taiwan so that this small country has become the largest exporter of computers and components?

"Or a Mahathir Mohamad who greatly improved life in Malaysia and increased income levels of all citizens in a mixed society of Malays, Chinese and Indians?

"Or a General Park of South Korea whose rough and disciplined administration industrialized a country where the large Swiss successfully competed with the companies of the former colonial power?

"Or a Deng Xiaoping, who released the energy of his people to achieve in 25 years the greatest reduction of poverty in world history?"

Sycip proceeded to say that "we as a nation are proud to have a university older than Harvard, proud that 20 cabinet members in one administration are UP graduates, proud that we are the only Asian country to have produced a Nobel laureate, La Salle and many other Catholic universities achieve men and women of upper income groups are educated. We praise those institutions of learning but as a nation, we seem to accept the scandalously high dropout rates of students in basic education. The figures are worse in Muslim areas and in public elementary schools in urban centers. We are proud of the fact that we are the only country in Asia that has attained a report that the Philippines and India, who claim to be democracies, lag behind East Asian countries in reducing poverty. China and Vietnam, both authoritarian states, are the two countries that have rapidly reduced poverty, but these lessons to be learned here?

Sycip also questioned the need for national unity. He asked, "Can we point to the politics of factionalism as the root of the extensive crime spree on national politics? Or is the lack of unity a basic disadvantage of an island nation? Is the misgivings of economic development the result of blind acceptance of Western thinking that political freedom or democracy comes ahead of economic development? Does the Government assume that there must be the 'rule of law' which implies an independent judiciary with well-trained and well-paid lawyers? Where judges may be poorly paid and subject to political pressures, is it possible to have an independent judiciary let alone a working democracy?"

* * *

There are no easy or simple answers to these and other questions that have been raised. One thing is certain. All our attempts at reforms have proven worthless with each new regime ending up grander and more corrupt than the last. And from the look of things, the cancer is more widespread than ever.

All our "people-powered" revolutions have so far been bloodless affairs. Unless we come up with the right answers, we may not be so lucky the next time around.

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE (The National Association of Philippine Newspapers)

Arroyo in history

LETTERS

THIS REFERS TO THE LETTER TITLED "His puzzlement led to a grand scandal coda." (Dec. 12, 5:30). I am a Filipino immigrant in the United States. I'm an interior designer working in Cavite. Like millions of overseas Filipino workers, I am working here to support my family. But I feel very sad because of what is happening in our country.

I read in the newspaper and on the Internet and watch on TV what is happening to our country. There's so much corruption in the present administration. Almost all the Filipinos in the United States and my friends and relatives back there in the Philippines are one in saying that corruption is so rampant in the Philippines.

I hope our President will do something about it. She is a smart and strong President, but she cannot control her people around her, including her husband.

If this continues, our country will go bankrupt. President Macapagal-Arroyo will go down in history as the most corrupt President in the Philippines.

—GILA ARCONA,
2295 Iba Dhmbs.,
California, USA

Rebels' use of child soldiers evil

THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL recent country report on the use of child soldiers by rebel groups in the Philippines confirms public suspicions that the enemies of the state have been all along resorting to inhumane practices to advance their cause.

Rathika Cramasuramony, the special representative for children and armed conflict, says five key rebel groups committed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, New People's Army and Abu Sayyaf recruit children.

It is about time that the international community take notice of this outrageous practice by self-proclaimed "freedom fighters" who are, in truth, just common criminals.

These bandit groups use children in combatants instead of preparing them for their role as future leaders or responsible, law-abiding citizens. Children should be taken care of and empowered well to that they will develop into physically intellectually and spiritually dependable citizens.

By looking after their soldiers, the country will inevitably benefit and advance as a prosperous nation. The true enemies of our children are the NPA, MILF and the Abu Sayyaf. It is just right to call these groups terrorists.

—EUGENE UMALI,
eudjai@gmail.com

Aside from PHAP, PMA consulted others too

OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THERE HAVE been opinion pieces regarding the Code of Ethics by the Philippine Medical Association (PMA). Because, (9/16/10 and 10/25/10) in these opinion pieces, there were several inaccuracies which should be corrected.

They implied that the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) influenced the drafting of the PMA Code of Ethics. PHAP is an organization which adheres to the highest ethical standards and fully respects the independence of health care professionals. Both PHAP and PMA have codes on ethical principles and standards in dealing with all its stakeholders to ensure that all our activities promote harmony for the welfare of the patient.

Following the revision of a watchdog code for the medical profession, PMA consulted with various stakeholders such as the Department of Health, the accused, physicians (e.g. oncologists in Filipinos (HOP), Chamber of Health Industries of the Philippines (CHIP), and the Dangerous Drugs Board to draw on their experiences. These organizations, including PHAP provided purely consultative advice as outside resources. This was also Discussion Group called PMA deputed.

PHAP also believes that the writer Hernia A. Anadis, writes letter (Inquirer, 10/22/10) misread Sec. 7 of Article 1 which states: "The provision and administration of the health of the patients should be prioritized over the benefits of the physicians and the health products industries." Clearly, it is opposite of what he/she has stated.

—REINER B. ILUSORIO,
chair, Ethics Committee,
Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of The Philippines,
East Wing Corporate Plaza,
1653-A, Amado Arnaiz, Makati City

Let's not taint Manny

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE NEWS STORY set in the headline "Granderwelcome set" (Inquirer, 12/9/10).

It is deeply disgusting that one of the spoils we offer a world-class sportsman and boxer is a congressional seat.

Let us leave our country's iconic titans. Let us not taint him with our politics. Let him wear his honorific and earned his millions of pesos through honest and dogged hard work, dedication and self-discipline.

People across the world will remember Manny Pacquiao, the boy and three fighter from the Philippines, not the honorable congressman from the second district of Sarangani City.

—JOEL J. DOPPLE,
joel.j.dopple@yahoo.co.uk

Domestic Fare Comparison

	Philippine Airlines	Other Domestic Airline
*All-Year-Round One Way Fares (all-in)		
Manila to:		
LUZON		
Laoag	Php 488	Php 588 +200**
VISAYAS		
Cebu	788	988 +200**
Bacolod	1088	888 +200**
MINDANAO		

On Time Performance**

Philippine Airlines	Other Domestic Airline
84.6%	Not more than 85.1%

**Based on 2010 performance stated August-September 2010

Legroom Space (A320 aircraft)

Philippine Airlines	Other Domestic Airline
Seating capacity 156 seats (Less seats, more legroom)	More than 170 seats (More seats, less legroom)

IATA Safety

Philippine Airlines	Other Domestic Airline

Online Booking

Philippine Airlines	Other Domestic Airline

PAL Econolight Class: Free baggage allowance at 15kg/passenger for meals. Value conditions apply. Visit our website for more details.

Local Destinations (One way, all-in)

P488 Laoag/**P588** Cebu-Iloilo-Legaspi
P588 Bacolod-Dumaguete-Kalibo, Puerto Princesa-Roxas, Tacloban-Tagbilaran
P588 Butuan, Cagayan de Oro-Zamboanga, Davao-Siquijor, General Santos-Zamboanga

Round-trip International Destinations (Taxes and surcharges apply)

$88 Bangkok, Jakarta, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Seoul, Saipan
$128 Shanghai/**$188** Beijing

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Across the NATION

Senate body to probe Hanjin deaths

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE SENATE LABOR committee will begin in January public hearings on the deaths of Filipino workers at a Korean-owned shipyard at the Subic Bay Freeport, Sen. Pia Cayetano said on Sunday.

Cayetano said she pursued Senate labor committee Chair Bragger Zubiri to lead the investigation after the state-owned Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) spared from suspension Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction (HHIC), the general contractor of the shipyard owner, and sponsor HHIC-Philippines Inc.

The SBMA only cancelled the certificate of registration and tax exemption (CITE) of HHIC subcontractor, Philsurfon, following the death of worker Jose Victor Gil on Nov. 26. A cancellation of the CITE means that Philsurfon could no longer operate in the freeport, said SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza.

"But how can Hanjin be exempted cleared of liability when it is the one selecting and supervising the subcontractors? Hanjin is aware that all these accidents and deaths have been occurring the past two years, but has it done anything to make its subcontractors comply with all occupational safety regulations?" Cayetano said in a statement.

Gil, according to HHIC Philippines Inc., was the 15th Filipino worker to have died in work-related accidents since 2006. A 250-kg steel-fastening unit fell on him as he unbuckled to rest. It was learned.

Two other workers died in rail-related accidents, according to the company.

The People's Task Force Hanjin and Subic Bay counted 24 deaths from accidents and suicides as of Dec. 6, according to its chair, former Zambales Vice Gov. Hermon Lachica II.

The latest to have died of malaria was Rogelio Deseville, 41, a native of Sorsogon City.

The 373-hectare shipyard does not have a hospital where workers can seek immediate medical help, Lachica said.

Saol de Mesa, president of the Shipbuilding and Construction Workers Association (SCWA), said the absence of a hospital was a violation of a labor law requiring such facility and the assignment of a doctor for every 100 workers.

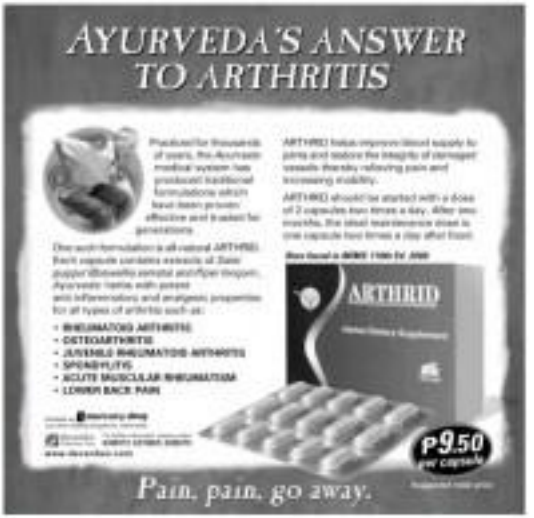
The shipyard has employed some 8,000 workers while the construction project for another shipyard has about 3,000 workers.

The number of injury cases involving workers have also climbed.

Jory Baluran, a worker assigned to the shipyard's Assembly 24-B, suffered burns when an acetylene hose fell and started a fire near his work area at around 3 p.m. on Friday, a report received by the SCWB said.

A coworker called the hapless on Sunday to say that he was still confined at the St. Jude Hospital in Olongapo City.

Teresita Ordaz, Inquirer Central Luzon



'Bank holiday' shocks depositors

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

SILOGRAN CITY—BOY MANUEL ESPINAS often is located adjacent to First Interstate Bank (FIB) Palo-Leyte branch, but he had no idea that the bank had already stopped operations since Wednesday.

And last Dec. Espina, Alejandro Cebios, a security guard at the bank, was unaware about the bank's precarious condition and was alarmed when he learned that he could no longer withdraw from his savings account.

The bank declared a holiday on Dec. 10, sending thousands of depositors into panic.

Its manager, Allan Ballesteros, declined to answer text messages and calls asking for the reason behind the bank holiday.

Espina, an optometrist, said he was shocked when he learned that the bank had declared a holiday.

"The bank manager is a friend of mine. But he never informed me about it," the optometrist said on Saturday.

He had been a client of the bank, located within the town proper 17 kilometers from this city, for two years now.

Espina, who said he has a "sizeable" deposit at FIB, was not worried when he first saw the "bank holiday" sign on the bank's facade.

"When they posted that bit of information, I did not mind it at first. It said bank holiday so I thought they closed because there was a declared holiday. I later learned what it means when I talked with the guards and from the conversations of bank employees," Espina said.

Six days before the Wednesday declaration, he saw several men "who appeared to be connected with the bank," visiting the bank several times.

"All I want now is that I get back my deposit," Espina said.

Cebios said he, too, was caught by surprise when he learned that the bank he had served for 10 months more had ceased operations.

"Nobody informed me about it," he said, showing his bank book with P9,000 as his savings deposit.

"I believed about this. I hope I can still get my money back, especially now that it's Christmas," the father of two said. Cebios started making deposit in the bank this September.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas announced last week that it had placed the bank under receivership.

The bank had been operating in Palo for eight years now and has other branches in Leyte and in Ormoc City. Southern Leyte, a BSP staff told the Inquirer.

LIVING BORACAY
Greenpeace volunteers install solar panels at the beach for the Solar Generation Renewable Energy Exhibit on Boracay Island.

Baguio to pay town royalties for hydro plant

BAGUIO CITY—THE CITY GOVERNMENT has agreed to pay the local government of Tuba, Benguet, its royalty share for operating Baguio's hydroelectric power plants there for more than 80 years.

The city also agreed to negotiate with Tuba a 2009 for an increased 3-percent share.

Residents of Barangay Asin in Tuba tried to stop the operations of the hydroelectric power plants last month, but they failed to persuade the local courts. Mayor Bernardo Bautista Jr. said on Wednesday.

City Administrator Peter Fianza had recommended the release of P367,078 to the Tuba government, representing its 1-percent share from the profits of four mini-hydro plants that were ordered built by the late Baguio Mayor Jeanette Paterno for the city in 1934.

Tuba is entitled to this share based on the provisions of the Local Government Code.

The city government requested the 3.6-megawatt plants from the Baguio Water District (BWD) and the Abcoki family-owned Hydroelectric Development Corp. (Hedeco) in 2006.

These firms operated the plants for 20 years under a development lease agreement.

Bautista had decided to let the city engineers run the plants themselves, saying the facilities could help bring down the cost of Baguio's energy usage.

The Asin plants generated P18.6 million in 2007, and had sold electricity worth P10.06 million between January and September this year, according to Fianza.

He urged city officials to consider Tuba's proposal to increase the profit share by 2 percent more because Hedeco retains a 3-percent share in the Benguet host community where the firm's plants operate.

Tuba had asked Hedeco to grant them the 3-percent share before the plants were returned to Baguio, Fianza said.

Bautista said the city government had been sued by Barangay Asin residents, who had demanded shares and who believed that Baguio operated the plants without proper permits.

But he said Baguio has a business permit from Tuba, which covers 2008. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Chinoy trader kidnapped

JOLO, SULU—A CHINESE-FILIPINO BUSINESSMAN was kidnapped on Sunday morning in Barangay Bilihid City here, police said.

The abduction of Peter Go, 32, and owner of One Pedro Trading, was the second incident in the province since Friday.

Jolo police chief Senior Supt. Johnston Bacin said witnesses had said that armed men in camouflage uniforms snatched Go at around 7:45 a.m., just after the victim opened his store.

Witnesses said the heavens that the armed men arrived on a gray van, which did not have licensed plates, and rammed Go's car.

Diddy, a cigarette vendor from the opposite side of the street, said five armed men dismissed the security guard of the establishment, immediately dragged Go to the vehicle and sped away.

"The victim did not fight back since one of the uniformed men poked a gun at his head," the said.

On Dec. 12, Hilarion Hadjan, principal of the Kuah Group Elementary School, was snatched by three unidentified armed men in Patong, Sulu.

Bacin said the police could not identify the kidnappers or what their motives were. Ed Cabreza, Inquirer Mindanao

Low turnout in split-Quezon voting; 'no' winning

LUCENA CITY—DAILY ONE OUT OF three voters in Quezon came on Saturday to vote in a historic plebiscite that was to divide the province into two, according to the local head of the Commission on Elections.

"Based on provincial reports, only about 30 to 35 percent of the total number of voters in Quezon participated," said Comelec Quezon chief Allan Enriquez.

"With the active campaigns by both 'yes' and 'no' advocates led by the Church and political figures, the turnout of voters was quite low," he said.

Quezon has about 900,000 voters, he said.

Initial results showed that the people did not want the province divided. "It's 70-30 in favor of 'no' voters," Enriquez said in a phone interview.

With a standing order from the Supreme Court preventing the Comelec from officially proclaiming the winner in the plebiscite, Enriquez said the agency would center all the votes from the different municipalities but would not sign the certificate of canvass and the proclamation of winner in the provincial canvass.

"We have to abide by the court order," he said.

Lucena Bishop Emilio Marquez, an ardent "yes" campaigner, urged the people to respect the results.

Republic Act No. 9405 paved the way for voting on the division of Quezon into two separate political units in the plebiscite.

Gov. Rafael Nantes, a former representative of the province's first district, was the main author of the measure which he pushed during his three terms in Congress along with Rep. Proceso Alcala, Rep. Lorenzo "Erin" Tañada II (1st district) and Rep. Danilo Suarez (3rd district) as co-authors until it was passed last year.

In a last-minute decision, Alcala abandoned his neutral stand and joined Nantes in supporting the law.

Rep. Mark Enverga, son of former Gov. Wilfredo Enverga, also supported the reformists' movement.

Saturday's political exercise was reportedly marred by massive vote-buying, particularly in the town of Candelaria and Lucena City.

"With the limited resources of our office and capability of the police, the enforcement of laws against vote-buying is really hard," Enriquez said.

Police reported the arrest of four people in Padre Burgos town for distributing "black propaganda" materials against the Nantes clan on the eve of the plebiscite.

Enriquez said the suspects would face charges of violation of the Omnibus Election Code.

Lawyer Freemanzo Pulgar of the Save Quezon Province Movement, one of the anti-Quezon split groups that asked the high court to stop the plebiscite on grounds of constitutional infirmities of some provisions of RA 9405, said he would withdraw the petition on Tuesday.

He called on all "yes" advocates to forget the intensive rivalry during the campaign and work together for the development of the province.

"The plebiscite was not a political contest. Let us again join together to chart the progress and development of our Quezon," he said.

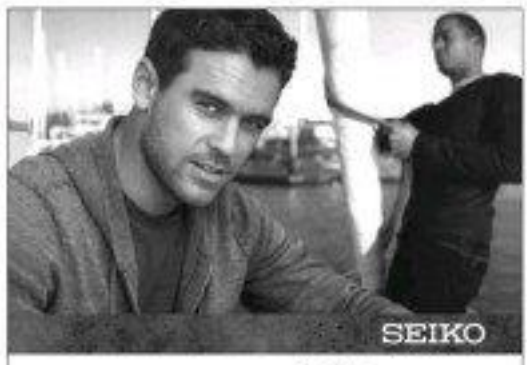
Tañada and Suarez both called on their supporters to respect the result of the plebiscite. They, however, held it ironic that their intention to fight poverty through the 1940 law that divided the province of most of the voters who said their constitutional right for a penalty sum of P100.

"We want to eradicate poverty but it was also poverty that killed the law," said Tañada over the phone.

"It's now the call of the present provincial government to deliver the progress and development that it promised to the voters. The people's expectation is high," he said.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

VOTERS in the Quezon plebiscite mark a ballot box bearing their names in the voters' list.



LTO sees more motorcycles than cars next year

DAVAO CITY— THE LAND TRANSPORTATION Office (LTO) expects a increase in the registration of four-wheeled motor vehicles next year.

But Wendia Morel, chief of the LTO General Office's internal audit division, told reporters here on Wednesday that the agency was also seeing an increase in the registration of motorcycles.

Even then, Morel said, the LTO had already expected its revenues to go down.

She said the impact of the US economic recession would surely take a toll on the sale of low-salaried vehicles in the Philippines as consumers had already started shifting to the more cost-efficient mode of transportation.

Celso Gregorio, chief of the city's road, traffic division, agreed with Morel's prediction.

He said that in the city alone, there are about 1,000 new motorcycles being registered every month.

For the whole of 2007, Gregorio said there were 15,000 new motorcycles registered in the city.

Gudes Dy, LTO director for Southern Mindanao, said lighter regulation for motorcycle drivers was also one of the factors that attracted people to purchase motorcycles.

Morel said the only worry her office had was that the number of traffic accidents could also increase with the rising number of motorcycles on the streets.

To prevent the increase in traffic accidents involving motorcycles, Dy said, the LTO would continue to conduct safety awareness seminars among motorists. Rhodelee P. Arao, Inquirer Mindanao

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, December 15, 2008
2nd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Num 24:2-7, 15-17a
Gospel: Mt 21:23-27

Jesus had entered the Temple and was teaching when the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders of the people came to him and asked, "What authority have you to act like this? Who gave you authority to do all this?"

Jesus answered them, "I will also ask you a question, only one. And if you give me an answer, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Where did John's baptism come from? Was it a work of God, or was it merely something human?"

They reasoned out among themselves, "If we reply that it was a work of God, he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' And if we say, 'The baptism of John was merely something human,' because of the people, since all hold John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know."

And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what right I do these things."

Commentary:

The preaching of John the Baptist drew great crowds. Some of them, said his enemies, were sent by the religious authorities. They could not deny the popularity of John's message, nor its implied criticism of Temple practices. Jesus represented another threat to their authority, so they were determined to trap him with this two words.

Jesus proved to be elusive to them that day, yet their tentative would continue until the redemption would deliver the Lord over to his death. God's plan for our salvation could only be accomplished through the Lord's perfect sacrifice.

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Impasse over Boracay property still unresolved

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE MONTH-long impasse over a disputed property on Boracay Island remained unresolved after a court denied the petition of an Australian resort operator for a temporary restraining order (TRO) to block the cancellation of his lease agreement with the property owners.

In a seven-page order dated Nov. 27, the Kalibo Regional Trial Court Branch 9 denied the petition for TRO filed by resort corporation Carp Technologies and his wife Verena against Pilipinas Shell last Oct. 17, 2007.

The Hutchinsons' petition also asked the court to issue a preliminary injunction and cease-and-desist against Shell.

The ruling issued by Judge Leodelia Aranguez-Bilbao, the same denied Hutchinson's request for a TRO to restrain Shell from executing the contract of lease and from taking over the 6,696-square-meter property before the expiration of the current 10-year contract on Dec. 4, 2000.

Shell had terminated the original contract including a 10-year extension until Dec. 4, 2017 for the alleged violations, including the failure of the Hutchinsons to secure the conformity of her estranged husband Charlie Morris in the extended contract.

The RTC also said there was no basis to grant the petition for a TRO based on Hutchinson's allegation that Shell violated its lessee sub-lessee Evangeline Dalino arranged to take over the property on Dec. 17, 2006.

"The court notes that it was not sufficiently shown that defendant Editha Shimeo did act outside to take over the plaintiffs' premises. Her did she file any suit, more particularly

POLICEMEN guard the disputed Boracay Samba suites resort, sheltered with posters of contending parties. AUSTIN ALCAYDE/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Evangeline Dalino and her companions, to take over the resort," Bilbao said in her order.

The court has set a pre-trial conference for the main petition on Jan. 21, 2009.

The Hutchinsons had summoned the contract with sublessee Dalino and her partners on February 2006 for alleged violations of the contract. But Dalino has accused the Hutchinsons of illegally ejecting her from her leased property.

The court issued the order about three weeks after security guards hired by Morris and Dalino forcibly took over the beach front property at Sitio 3.

But the Hutchinsons have filed another complaint before the Municipal Circuit Trial Court of Buruanga-Malay against the takeover.

In an eight-page complaint, the Hutchinsons accused Morris and Dalino of forcible entry and damages, and asked the court to issue a preliminary mandatory injunction against the respondents ordering them to vacate the premises of the disputed property.

Morris and Dalino have filed an opposition to the complaint with counter-claims.

In a recent interview in Boracay, Dalino said they would not leave the premises of the property until the court resolves the case.

The Hutchinsons with their 3-year-old twin children have been holed up in the third floor of the their apartment building since the takeover while Dalino and Morris were occupying the ground floor and the adjacent properties. The children have stopped attending pre-school since the takeover.

Only the couple's employees leave the building to bring food, supplies and do errands for the couple. The couple also blocked the doors to their unit from the inside with chairs and heavy furniture.

"We are still suffering more than a month after," said Gregg in a separate interview held recently.

Verena said they have not left the property's premises because Morris and Dalino would not allow them to enter the property again.

Policemen from the Boracay Special Tourist Police Office have been posted in shifts at the resort to maintain order and prevent violence.

NEWSBRIEFS

BAMBANG/CITY

P1M for Christmas gifts

THE CITY government here will spend more than P1 million for gifts to the city's poor families and to the shore-a-meal project for the poor children.

Mayor Leandro Pendilton said some P500,000 was allotted for Christmas gifts, consisting of bandicoots to 6,000 families while some P150,000 was budgeted for the "share-a-meal" to 1,500 children.

The money used for these yearly activities was taken from the savings of the city government and donations from the private sectors.

The gift-giving activity will be done on the morning of Dec. 23 while the share-a-meal will be held in the afternoon of the same day.

Rayna Amarado, Inquirer Visayas

LEGAZPI/CITY

Spanish gov't grants P96M for landfill

THE SPANISH government granted 1.5 million euros or P96 million to the city government to finance its first sanitary landfill to be put up next year.

Councilor Boby Rosal said the grant, which was awarded through the help of the National Economic Development Authority, says the city government here supposedly owning P63 million from the bank.

Rosal said the grant was necessary since the city has not yet have had a sanitary landfill that complies with solid waste management laws.

Rosal, who chairs the city council's environment committee, said a 12-hectare sanitary landfill will be put up in Barangay Banquerohan, where solid wastes from the city's 70 villages will be disposed.

Sylvain Ajedo, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NAGA/CITY

Sarong Banggi assembly

THE ZAMORO Banggi Organization International Inc. (ZBOII), the country's largest organization of Bicolano residents and professionals, will hold its annual general assembly on Dec. 27 in Naga City.

Councilor Vicente Jr. Ty, president of the Philippines-Los Baños and served after Illocos's stand because now song, the organization is composed of 12,000 members all over the country and in key cities of the USA, Middle East and Europe.

For details, call Mario Cortés (09175112000) or Cristina Magsino-Pilario (09178202043).

SORSOGON/CITY

Housing for poor

SORSOGON housing units will be turned over to the poor families this Christmas in a project of the Gawad Kalinga (GK) Foundation in coordination with various local governments in the province.

Senen Bedaya, provincial administrator of the Sorsogon Capitol, said they planned to give 20 housing units in Bulo, city's proposed SIKVIL-Lupa, Barangay Sawa, 10 in Castilla town and 50 in Barangay Guinsang, Prieto Diaz.

Bedaya said they were targeting to deliver the housing units in time for Christmas as a gift to the poor families, particularly those affected by the recent calamities.

Roy Gonzales, Inquirer Southern Luzon

LAGUNA

Cops rescue drug syndicate detainee

A NAIA allegedly detained since Monday by a drug syndicate was rescued sometime Friday in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

A police report said Abel Cabiso, 27, resident of Olongapo City, who had been detained for four days in a room in Barangay Zone Tercad was rescued at around 12:30 p.m. by members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, Dasmariñas police, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Cavite Special Operations Group.

Maj. Christopher Abrahano, PDEA Calabarzon regional director, said Cabiso was held captive by Jessara drug pushers in a Muslim community in Barangay Zone Tercad for Alleged non-remittance of drug money.

Abrahano identified the arrested suspects as Engelbert Tabio, Lenny Hilario and Jason Kabila.

Marlon P. Cinco, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Clergy calls for 'loving confrontation' in rights defense

BIAS, CASTE—RELIGIOUS COMmunities raised here a wooden cross along with the flags Thursday, a day after the 62th Anniversary of the International Human Rights' Day, and held an ecumenical service in response to what they alleged to the recent lynching of a Dalit priest.

They expressed the belief that it is every Christian's commitment "to serve God and the people for freedom, justice, peace, and total development."

But "if you come from a position of anger, or inflict violence against violence, violence will happen," said Sr. Marilene Serrano, director of the Consecrated Life Association in Imus (Calisa), an organization of religious here.

She quoted Edith Burgos, mother of missing activist Jonas Burgos, who said her family took the disposition of forgiveness and love.

"We still look for him (Jonas) with anger and hatred in our hearts. We will learn to forgive the abductors and the people who give orders," Burgos said.

In the months that Burgos kept looking for her son, she said the government's answers was only silence.

"We promised to ourselves that if there's help needed, we will not keep silent," she said.

Burgos and political prisoners Pastor Berlin Guerrero and Axel Pinpin were panelists in the forum held Thursday here.

"It's going to Mass or receiving communion overnight? What do you think will Jesus do at times like these?" Serrano challenged the participants.

The group works with farmers and workers in Cavite.

Last February, she remembered barangkada Stations of the Cross to help release some abducted workers in Cavite.

"I was angered when I saw nine women workers punched in her stomach," Serrano recalled. But as a leader of a religious community that promotes human rights, she believed in what she called a "loving confrontation."

Serrano was a former activist during the Marcos Era.

Imus Catholic Bishop Antonio Tagle presided over an ecumenical service with Bishop Nolet Operiano of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and Gabriel Cassil of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines.

"In Jesus with rights is to live with hopes," was the Ecloue of the Mass.

The Cavite Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace recorded 2198 incidents of civil, political, economic and human rights violations from January to June, of which 20,000 were victims, and 29 were cases of killing and forced disappearances.

From 2001 to 2007, there were 907 cases of extrajudicial killings and 197 of forced disappearances from 2001 to the present, according to a Karapatan report.

"Majority of them were from Southern Tagalog," Sgt. Clarence Banquerigo, deputy secretary general, said during the forum.

"So much more needs to be done 60 years after the declaration of human rights," Leila de Lima, chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, said at the ecumenical hour.

The participants marched to Camp Paciencia here where Gonzalez, Burgos and the family of activist Rocsan Alcantara, included in Southern Tagalog 7/2, had a dialogue with Senior Supt. Fernando Zaffa, Cavite police director. Marlene F. Chico and Karen Lapidoo, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

NPA rebs bomb Globe cell site in Negros Occ.

BACOLOD CITY—A GLOBE TELECOM CELL site was bombed and destroyed by about 10 suspected New People's Army rebels Saturday night in Barangay Mabini, Escalante City, Negros Occidental.

Chief Insp. Santiago Rapio, Escalante police chief, on Sunday said the suspected rebels placed an explosive at the cell site after pushing away by destroying the fence of the unmanned and isolated facility.

Rapio said the explosion destroyed the power supply of the cell site but failed to inflict damage on its antennas.

The latest bombing incident allegedly perpetrated by rebels in Escalante came after the rebel group's Negro Mahinay Command also claimed responsibility for the destruction of a Globe Telecom cell site in Cauayan town, Negros Occidental three months ago.

Rapio said the Globe Telecom security staff in northern Negros informed him that they received threats to bomb the company facilities if they continued to ignore their demands for revolutionary taxes.

In 2005, suspected rebels also destroyed a Globe Telecom cell site in Barangay Balintawak, Escalante City.

Rapio also admitted to have received a text message that the NPA, who allegedly responsible for the incidents in what could be a punishment for the Globe Telecom's refusal to give in to their demands.

Senior Supt. Manuel Pelle, provincial police director, also condemned on Sunday the bombing, saying "the act was counter-productive and contrary to the best interest of the Negrense people."

Military pullout

The military and police, in their records, pointed at the NPA as the culprits in the destruction of properties in the Escalante-Sagay-Cadiz-Silay-San Carlos City area, that occurred after the 15th infantry battalion was pulled out from the area.

They also alleged that the NPA executed three barangay officials and a policeman as well as burned expensive plantations and tractors of sugar planters who failed to pay revolutionary taxes causing damages estimated at more than P105 million for this year.

The 303rd Brigade Philippine Army and 6th Regional Mobile Group have re-aligned their presence in northern Negros, as they deployed more troops in Kanlaon areas to prevent more atrocities by alleged rebels.

During the weekend, a company-sized NPA unit, which was redeployed to Mindanao three months ago to help the Pastor Bacani Command (PBC) of the Pulang Bayi Sur to Liberate Liberation Front renegades, reassemble in northern Negros.

Carlo B. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

2,000 Filipino workers lose jobs in Taiwan, says Meco

By Kristine L. Alave

TAIPEI—THE NUMBER OF Filipinos who were laid off from the Taiwanese export industry, which is reeling from the global recession, has risen to around 2,000, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Meco) here said.

Antonio Basilio, Meco managing director and resident representative, said his office recently processed documents from around 900 Filipinos who were fired from their jobs in 40 firms in the manufacturing and export sectors.

Last month, 1,263 Filipinos were rendered jobless in Taiwan and were sent back home to Manila, according to Meco.

There are about 90,000 Filipinos in Taiwan. Some 65,000 work in the manufacturing sector, while 25,000 are in household services. The rest are employed in the agricultural and fisheries sectors.

With 90 percent of its products from the electronics and semiconductor sectors exported to the United States and Europe, Taiwan is one of the countries in Asia severely hit by the global economic slump.

Workers, most of them first-timers, have left the offices of the recession in Taiwanese factories and plants either for back-to-working hours or shut down because of the reduced demand from traditional markets.

Rodolfo Sabulao, Meco director for labor affairs, said Filipino workers in the electronics and garment sectors were the most vulnerable.

However, workers from the Philippines and other countries are not so vulnerable as their Taiwanese counterparts who demand higher pay, he said.

"If some comes to worst, the Taiwanese are the first to be let go. So far, there are 140,000 Taiwanese who have been laid off," Sabulao said.

Furthermore, hiring continues to outpace the number of unemployed workers, according to Meco.

In November alone, more than 1,700 Filipinos were hired by Taiwanese firms, Sabulao said.

As of the first quarter of 2008, Basilio said job orders from Taiwan grew 26 percent, exceeding the labor department's target of 10 percent. But the status of the world economy has since worsened.

Compared with OFWs in the export industry, Filipinos who work as domestic workers and caregivers are "insulated" from the recession so far, according to Sabulao.

Acting as both patrons of a nation familiar yet employed, OFWs will retain their jobs, he said. "So far, we don't have displacement (domestic workers and caregivers) here."

Qatar offers 37,000 jobs to Filipinos

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jects in the Middle East have also been affected, with a leading Dubai real estate firm reportedly laying hundreds of workers.

Ms Arroyo announced the job openings at a luncheon with members of the Filipino community in Qatar at the Sheraton Doha Hotel and Resort, shortly upon her arrival on Saturday.

In a phone interview, Press Secretary Jesse Dureza said about 20 CEOs disclosed job orders for 37,000 Filipino workers, which will start next month.

The job openings offset the displacement of Filipino workers in other countries, according to Ms Arroyo.

Job losses in Taiwan

Mobarizing said 1,000 Filipino workers in Taiwan were re-recruited recently, while 5,000 others are expected to lose their jobs. (See story on this page.)

Ms Arroyo said employment in Qatar and other Middle East countries protected Filipino workers because of their diligence, trustworthiness, efficiency and skill.

But to prepare "for the unexpected," she said her administration had launched a P2.83-million Filipino Livelihood Support Fund to help displaced OFWs pursue their studies or engage in livelihood projects.

Compared with other countries in the throes of economic difficulties arising from the global recession, "the Philippines is not in dire straits because Filipinos agreed to swallow the bitter pill of additional taxes to subsidy the expanded value-added tax," Ms Arroyo said.

She thanked the OFWs for their sacrifices and concern not only for their families but also for their country as she wished them a merry Christmas.

With the growing number of Filipino workers with engineering background there, she directed the Professional Regulations Commission, which is now under the labor department, to conduct licensure examinations in Qatar.

Unusual reception

Dureza said the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, welcomed Ms Arroyo at the Qatar International Airport.

"This is something not usually done by his royal highness when a visiting head of state arrives in Doha," Dureza said.

On their way to the VIP Room of the airport, the emir mentioned to Ms Arroyo the recently signed Additional Protocol to the 1997 Bilateral Agreement on the Employment of Filipino Manpower. Employment in the State of Qatar.

Signed on Dec. 14 by Labor Secretary Marianito Roque and Qatar Labor Minister Salvadora Hussain Al Dhahir Al-Shaeri, the protocol sets the mechanisms for the enhancement of regulations on the protection of the welfare of OFWs in Qatar.

Estimates of Filipino workers in Qatar range from 150,000 to 200,000, but Roque himself has placed the figure at 180,000.

The 3,000 Filipino contingent to Qatar has reached 36,277, making the countrywide estimate the fourth biggest destination of Filipino workers worldwide and the third in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Dureza said that during a luncheon meeting on Saturday, CEOs and top employers in Qatar told Ms Arroyo that most of their workforces were Filipinos because "they get the work done faster and better."

One hospital chief has 300 Filipinos out of 500 staff members, and that Barbel Co., which builds the multibillion-dollar Doha Airport, has 60 Filipino engineers, architects and workers in their workforce, he said.

Among the companies represented at the luncheon meeting were the US-based engineering giant Bechtel, Al Ahli Hospital, Staffing Group of Companies, Midmac Contracting and Urban Resort and Convention Center.

Bechtel Doha CEO Lavern Rutrude said that 60 percent of Bechtel's workers in the construction of the new Doha International Airport were Filipinos.

Mindanao peace process

During the visit, the President said she would look into the plight of OFWs, under the auspices of Qatar's leadership in the Mindanao peace process, and discuss issues of mutual concern.

Ms Arroyo would also invite Qatar businessmen to invest in the Philippines and look into the plight of OFWs in the emirate.

At a meeting called by Ms Arroyo with Philippine ambassadors to Middle East countries at the same hotel on Saturday, a consensus was reached to limit the deployment of Filipino workers to Nigeria, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

Dureza said the ban should stay even though the job opportunities were available because of security and safety reasons.

At the meeting, Ms Arroyo directed Ambassador Fay Climaco, the country's special envoy to the Middle East, to "make an assessment of the situation in Lebanon (possible) deployment by March (2009)."

The Lebanese honorary consul to Manila, Josef Assaf, declined to comment on Ms Arroyo decision, saying he would await for the official statement from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Unfortunate

However, recruitment industry consultant Emmanuel Geslani criticized the extension of the ban on Lebanon, calling it "unfortunate."

"Withdrawing ban not realized the chronic work in Lebanon. A decade if the whole government has a cool assessment by our ambassador on what's happening there, especially with regard to peace and order and the political stability," Geslani said.

Some 45,000 OFWs, mostly domestic helpers, have been trafficked into Lebanon by illegal recruiters since the crackdown since August of 2006 up to November 2008 despite a deployment ban imposed by the government in July 2006 at the height of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

The 45,361 Filipinos added to some 35,000 other OFWs who chose to remain or were not allowed by their employers to go home during the conflict means there may be up to more than 70,000 OFWs now in Lebanon, data the Philippine government needs to look after.

Heady challenges facing Obama keep growing

Front page A-1

meant in more fronts than even Franklin Delano Roosevelt encountered when he took office in the midst of the Great Depression in 1933. Obama will be sworn in as the country's 44th president in January.

His leadership will be tested immediately and in many ways. His performance from the outset could well set the tone for his presidency.

Not only is Obama saddled with lingering wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that he is vibrantly committed to end, **but he also faces dual and dire fronts of daunting challenges:**

- A deepening US recession and a spreading global economic crisis.
- An automotive industry on the brink of collapse and searching for a lifeline.
- Increasing unemployment and its ripple effects.
- The threat of terrorism amid a historic transfer of power.

Political scandal

At the same time, Obama may be drawn into an unfolding political scandal over Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich's alleged efforts to trade the presidential-elect's former Senate seat for personal gain.

The ongoing federal investigation could ensnare some of Obama's top advisers and taint the self-styled reformer who has tried to steer clear of Illinois' Chicago politicos.

"The president-elect said he was 'shocked, disappointed' by aides did not try to cut deals with Blagojevich. At the very least, however, the scandal is a distraction for a leader facing the magnitude of problems on his plate.

Ambitious plans

Obama also has promised an ambitious foreign and domestic policy agenda that includes withdrawing most US combat troops from Iraq, drawing up governance, overhauling the health care system, fighting global warming and developing alternative energy sources.

Obama has vowed to cut taxes and launch a massive public works program to rebuild the country's aging infrastructure. According to the Wall Street Journal, Obama's team is considering a stimulus package that would be far larger than previous estimates and might reach $1 trillion over two years.

The president-elect is expected to be hurried by his economic team on the outline of the stimulus plan next week with a view to getting the measure passed by Congress by the time he is sworn in next month.

Some priorities may fall to the wayside or be share piecemeal. But, so far, Obama has signaled an intent to move forward on much if not all of those plans.

Push or Mount Rushmore

The question is how quickly Obama can accomplish his goals, while simultaneously confronting the growing list of major problems.

"There's a lot of ground-giving under him. It's a terrible challenge," said Fred Greenstein, a Princeton University professor emeritus of politics and presidential historian.

"From one perspective, it's as if he's about to take over the captain's job on a sinking ship. From the other perspective, he could be on a glide path to Mount Rushmore if he does a combination of narrow building and energizing people while dealing with the economic disaster by producing some constructive changes in the society and in the economy."

The Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota is a monumental granite sculpture of the heads of US Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

"The striking thing is he doesn't seem scared," Greenstein added.

Indeed, Obama exudes confidence. He has surrounded himself with people in his incoming White House and Cabinet who have decades more experience than him in government or will be foreign and domestic policy heavyweights, such as military Bush holdover Clinton, Larry Summers, Tom Daschle and Robert Gates, longtime Washington insiders.

Comparatively, Obama has been on the national stage for a short time. He was introduced to the country during the Democratic National Convention in 2004 when he won in the Illinois Legislature and running for the US Senate. Age 47, he will become president after serving just four years in the Senate.

Comparison with FDR

Most historians liken the situation facing Obama in that which confronted Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But the comparison does not seem to do justice to the colossal challenges Obama is facing.

Roosevelt was already an established politician when he came into office at the depths of the Great Depression in a country with no safety net for the suffering. And the economy was much worse then than it is now.

But Roosevelt did not have one man on the other, as a political scandal swirling around him or did not have a planet suffering from global warming and wrestling to control resources thereof.

Roosevelt also let his four-month transition pass by keeping his distance from Republican Herbert Hoover. The two men had sharp policy differences over how to address the Great Depression, and Roosevelt stayed mum between his election and his inauguration.

Extraordinarily active

But Obama. He's been extraordinarily active since his election.

With only seven weeks to go until economy sworn, he makes his views known—though he always is careful to defer to Bush when it's decision time. As president-elect, however, Obama's words now carry the power to move financial markets—perhaps even more so than those of Bush.

He has held regular news conferences to announce his Cabinet picks and he gives the Democratic radio address on most weekends.

"Part of what he's doing is paving his own roads some time that there's only one president while making up all the rangers," Greenstein said.

Plenty of political capital

Politically with things on hand, Obama can claim one change for the better as a success. If the economic and security situation deteriorates further, he can rightly say he inherited a mess.

Obama won the election with more than 50 percent of the popular vote, and nearly three-fourths of people in an AP-GfK poll last week said they approved of how Obama has been handling the transition.

Judging by those numbers, he has plenty of political capital to spend as he tackles the country's mounting problems. Reports from AP and Reuters

Realtors overwhelm 'toothless' Tigers

COCA-COLA'S Mark Macapagal fouls Dennis Espino of Sta. Lucia in the rushing Realtor wins on pot up a shot.

By Macong R. Cacdac

DEFENDING CHAMPION STA. LUCIA OVERWHELMED A SUPERCRUTY-depleted Coca-Cola squad, 98-66, and stayed well within reach of an automatic quarterfinal slot in the KFC Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

With the Tigers missing their top three guns, the Realtors jumped out of the gates hard and practically widened their way to their ninth win in 12 games to tie idle Barangay Ginebra for fifth place.

Manthonlo came from behind to nip Talk 'N Text, 95-93, in the second game in the Tender Juicy Cup, and also remained mathematically in the hunt for an automatic quarterfinal slot.

James Yap and Eraño Villanueva scored the Giants' final eight points to nip a Purefoods rally from 17 points in the third period.

The Giants lengthened to 10-9 after stopping a two-game losing skid even as Talk 'N Text dropped into a three-way tie for second at 9-7 with idle Rain or Shine and San Miguel Beer.

Yap finished with 25 points and Villanueva, whose two-handed dunk with 5.8 seconds left proved to be the icing on the cake, hit 24 aside from grabbing 10 rebounds.

Mac Cardona paced the Texters with 30, 17 of them coming in the final two periods, with Jared Cuevas adding 23.

Nelbert Omolon helped jumpstart the Sta. Lucia offense with 11 of his 23 points as the Realtors pounced on the absence of Ali Tenkiru, Nic Belmonte and Alex Calaguyan.

Leading by eight after the first period, the Realtors went up by 18 after the half and by 17 heading into the fourth to deal the Tigers their 11th loss against just six wins.

The Tigers now face the prospects of facing hot Red Bull in their last two outs expected to be back anytime soon.

Calaguyan showed up for the game but was not fielded in.

Tenkiru, whose 15.3 points and 13 rebound game averages form the backbone of the Tigers, watched the game in street and in coaches with Belaso behind the bench.

"We're just lucky that Coca-Cola had injuries in their key players," said Fernandez. "And the players played well because they knew it was a crucial game for us."

Joseph Yeo scored all of his 14 points from the second quarter on and Medel Mendoza scattered 12, with Norman Gonzales contributing 10.

The Realtors never really saw the need to ask Kelly Williams in Ammiyan. The reigning MVP could return a Freedom-ring left-handed windmill jam late in the first period, which still left him smiling because the team would advance.

Mark Cruzeiro Telan scored 20 points, 11 of them in the final period, and tried sweeping the light for the Tigers the way he did in the stretch of a 109-91 upset victory over San Miguel Beer on Friday.

Belaso sustained a bubbly knuckle in the eight while after that win over the Beermen, while Tenkiru is expected to be out for at least six weeks because of a fractured left middle finger.

Only the final spot in the wild card phase, it seems, is up for grabs for the Tigers and the idle Bombs, with Coca-Cola only chance of becoming the No. 5 team seeding on a victory over Red Bull or losses by Red Bull in its 6-and-save games.

GAMES TOMORROW (Araneta Coliseum)
12 n.n.—Barako Bull vs Sta. Lucia
3:30 p.n.—Sta. Lucia vs Talk 'N Text
6:30 p.n.—Barangay Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text

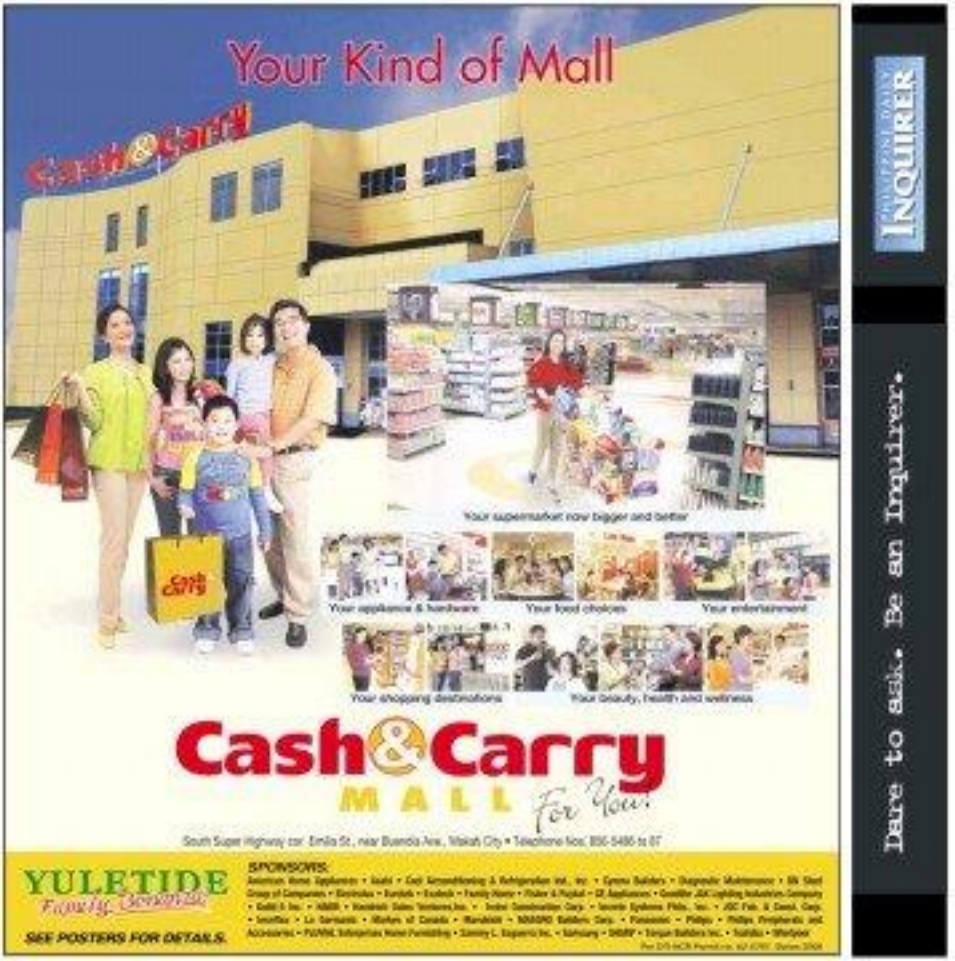
Coca-Cola (98)
Yeo 14, Omolon 23, Yap 14, Villanueva 24, Gonzales 10, Mendoza 12, Belaso 0, Ilagan 0, Miranda 4, Melendez 2, Ilao 2.

Sta. Lucia (66)
Cruzeiro 20, Telan 20, Cuevas 23, Cardona 30, Castro 0, Ellarina 0, Ebona 0, Ebona 0, Ebona

More Sports on A29-A32

SPORTS

Realtors, TJ Giants in key wins



Aplus METRO
Edna Alabastro S. Munday

DID YOU KNOW

THE YOUNG Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study shows that 43 percent of Metro Manila residents aged 15 to 24 said they would support the legalization of divorce in the Philippines. The national average was 41 percent.
Cyrill L. Bonabon, Inquirer Research

PNP going after 13 rob suspects

By Gabriel Cardinoza, Inquirer Northern Luzon and Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE WILL intensify its anticrime operations despite an ongoing investigation into the Parañaque City shootout on Dec. 5 which left several robbery suspects, six civilians and a policeman dead.

"Thirteen members of the [robbery] group are still on the loose and they can regroup," Director Leopoldo Bataoil, National Capital Region Police Office chief, said in a phone interview.

"We are now looking from anywhere in the Philippines," he added.

Bataoil was in Baguio, Pangasinan, yesterday to attend the funeral Mass for Officers de Guzman and Feb 7 [illegible], 7-year-old daughter Lou Abegail, two of the civilians killed in the firefight between the police and suspected members of the Velasco gang.

(Story continues on Page A2)

Family loses house, car in predawn fire

By DJ Yap

A FIRE RAISED A 40-YEAR-OLD house to the ground early yesterday morning in San Juan City and destroyed some P1M worth of property, including a Mercedes Benz sedan, authorities said.

The blaze hit the two-story residence of Gerardo Reboat, 57, in Barrios N., Barangay Pasadena at 1:51 a.m., said arson investigator Fire Supt. Gowen Rin Antonio.

Reboat and his family escaped from the burning house unhurt after his daughter woke them up upon seeing the living room ceiling in flames, the investigator added.

Antonio said he suspected a short circuit sparked the fire which spread quickly through the old house which was made mostly of wood.

"We know with old houses, fire spreads really fast so the family didn't have enough time to save their possessions," the fire-man told the inquirer.

He added that the fire only managed to save their Mitsubishi Pajero which was parked close to the gate from the Mercedes Benz.

The house was almost completely gutted except for a one-story shack in the back, Antonio said.

Reaching the fourth alarm, the fire was put out in less than an hour at 3:38 a.m.

THE FIRE spread quickly through the house which was built mostly out of wood. It also razed the family's car, a Mercedes Benz.

FIREMEN do their best to battle a fire which broke out in an old house on F Benitez Street in San Juan City. The damage to property was estimated at P1.9 million.

METROBRIEFS

Man stabbed dead

A 19-YEAR-OLD member of a gang in Tondo, Manila, was arrested yesterday for allegedly killing a fast food restaurant employee without any provocation. Cedo Cabral, who said he was a member of the so-called "Daily Diablo Gang" or "D-12," of Pasig Street in Tondo, was tabbed in follow-up operations conducted by operatives of the Manila Police District homicide section. His victim was identified as Chowking service crew member Daniel Bonifacio Jr., 23, of Block-8 Lot 24 Mobile Community, Tondo, Mananjay's wife, Esmeralda, was injured after she tried to stop Cabral's rampage in the hostel. PO3 Jay Santos of the MPD homicide section quoted at around 4:30 a.m. Cabral, who was drunk, was being taken from a nearby store when Cabral, for an apparent reason, stepped the victim's hand. The two men argued, and Cabral beat home. Amateur returned with a 12-inch knife and stabbed the unsuspecting victim in the chest.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Cops charge woman

PNP, IOC have filed charges against a 58-year-old woman linked to the robbery and death of her employer in Project 4, Quezon City, last week. Senior Supt. Marcelino Pedroso, Quezon City Police District homicide section chief, said they were also looking for the boyfriend of Florentina Pedrolan, who has been charged with the death of Norma Sunga, her employer. Pedroso identified Pedrolan's boyfriend as Freddie Ramos, 31. Pedrolan and Ramos were linked to Sunga's death after an 8-year-old boy said he saw Ramos coming out of Sunga's house. Ramos was also seen by the boy and his friend. The boy said he recognized Ramos because he worked as a carpenter in a nearby house. Police said the P130,000 in cash the victim was reported to be carrying at the time of her death was missing. Pedrolan, however, denied that she and her boyfriend killed the victim who had been beaten to death with a blunt object.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Parañaque shootout victim laid to rest

By Michael Ramos

UNDER A GRAY AFTERNOON sky, the grieving family and friends of Ronaldo Dumbo the other day bade goodbye to the man whom they warmly remembered as a loving husband, a caring father and a hardworking employee.

"I will forever miss the smile of the father-to-be and the love he showed for me and for our four children. I don't know if I will be able to accept his death," Evangeline's wife, Lourdes, told the inquirer after the funeral.

Dumbo, 39, an employee of the Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC) Skyway was one of the six civilians killed in the Dec. 5 shootout between policemen and suspected members of two robbery gangs in a subdivision in Barangay Cala Cala (Serviceable) story on Page A2.11

He was initially tagged as one of the gang members, although he was later cleared by the Northeast Capital Region Police Office *(See story on page A2.11)* of any involvement in the robbery gangs.

Amid calls for justice, some 200 people shouted a curtain of 50 vehicles, joined Dumbo's family in bringing his remains to the Golden Haven Memorial Park in Pulang Lupa, Las Piñas City at around 1 p.m. Sunday.

"We would like to make it clear that Mr. Dumbo was not involved in any list of suspects. He was a good husband, father, brother and employee," PCRO chief Director Leopoldo Bataoil said at the funeral.

PNP going after 13 rob suspects

From page A25

The NCRPO chief, who represented PNP Director General Jesus Versoza, was accompanied by Dante Jimenez, head of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption.

Dr. Vera and his daughter were buried at 1 p.m. yesterday at a public cemetery in neighboring Dasmariñas town, hometown of his wife, Lilian.

At least 40 vehicles joined the motorcade from Manila to the cemetery. Hundreds of residents earlier joined the funeral procession from the Dr. Vera house in Barangay Osmeña in Kawit, to the town's Catholic church about a kilometer away.

Bataoil said the policemen involved in the Dec. 5 operations were now being investigated by the PNP Internal Affairs Service (IAS), National Police Commission, National Bureau of Investigation and the Commission on Human Rights.

"We will cooperate with [these agencies]. Our personnel have always been open to any investigation," he said.

On Thursday, Director Jaime Bayan, IAS inspector general, said he ordered the directors of the police's Highway Patrol Group, Special Action Force and Traffic Management Police (Aaron's police) all personnel involved in the shootout within their quarters.

Those who participated in the operations were 13 members of the SPG, 10 members of the HPG and a still unidentified member of SAF personnel.

"Kasama [sa operasyon] ang mga pulis and so we relied on some [in Dr. Vera's family in whatever way we could offer," Bataoil said, adding, "We will keep them updated on the investigation."

In Dumaguete, the CIDG in Central Luzon commemorated the inclusion of the case of Benjamin Delgado—one of the civilians killed in the Parañaque shootout—in the agency's investigation of the incident.

"We just got his family's addresses and those will be forwarded to the central office considering that the CIDG [in Metro Manila] has jurisdiction over the case," Inspector Aurelio Regino, CIDG regional director, told the inquirer on Saturday.

Delgado's wife, Marilena, said her husband's employer told her they learned via the newscasts of witnesses, the white Toyota Revo of the robbery suspects hit Delgado and ran over him as policemen fired at the vehicle.

METRO

Citizen's Call

Your City of Adventure and Misadventure is made up of stories.
Your stories. That we all share in.

- Got a signage issue your way?
- Wanting changed on your streets on your day?
- Need Galindo Homer on the street where you live?
- Are you up to arms against the expansion of an industrial house?
- Send in a mini-science campaign project with a big positive impact on your community?
- Got stuff to publish?
- Put up with crawling and fighting neighbors?
- Is there an emerging new market in your neighborhood?
- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

Text, mail or email it, with photos if you can, then log and save what you see and tell and send updates as the story way to make Metro Manila a safer, more beautiful and fun working place to live in.

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P.S. Please don't send Spam, commercial advertising and money. Not for sale.

INQUIRER

Metro Citizen's Call

Regular Meralco monitoring needed

I WANT you to know that on Dona Street, Barangay Commonwealth, someone else here been tapping illegally into our electrical lines. We called up Meralco Commonwealth and they removed the illegal connections but after they left, the people put them back. Maybe it would help if Meralco were to regularly monitor the electrical lines in our area.

EDGAR, 36, Quezon City

Turning thoroughfares into parking lots

ARE THESE pages on Tandang Sora and Commonwealth Avenues authorized to turn these areas into free parking space? Who gave them the authority to do so? They scare a lot of traffic.

MARIO DE CUBA, 55, Novaliches, Quezon City

Human obstructions in Malate

THIS in connection with Ms. Carol's message regarding sidewalk encroachers in Malate (Metro Citizen's Call, Dec. 1 issue). We have the same situation in front of the church wall on the sidewalk on M. H. del Pilar and other major and side streets in the area as they are occupied by homeless people. This then are either pitching people who use the sidewalks for their 5:00 meals. Can Mayor Lim and MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando do something? I too am sick and tired of these people. Why? They're citizens with street people?

CHET B. LA ROSA, Manila

Worsening traffic in Pembo, Makati

TRAFFIC on Zamparuta Bridge connecting Pembo, Makati, is getting worse. There are vendors on both sides of the road, thus endangering the life of pedestrians. Add to this the minibus parked on the roadside and the road clogging coming from the nearby utility compounds. Landlubbing residents in the area are affected by this innumerable tragedy. I appeal to our officials to please look for and find a solution to this worsening traffic problem.

PEDRO PLACIO, 57, Pembo, Makati

USELESS TRAFFIC LIGHT

Richard Tan, 28, of Binondo, Manila, writes: "For the past several months, traffic has been clogged on both sides of Padre Burgos in front of the Manila City Hall because of the installation of a traffic light at the intersection. This traffic light is useless since vehicles coming out from Anda and Intramuros are very few, causing inconvenience to the majority of motorists every day. It makes matters worse, right after the intersection are some of the Manila Traffic and Parking Bureau making apprehensions. Ironically, this situation is taking place right outside City Hall. Amanullah, Mayor Alfredo Lim."

CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, a Tasty Gift for Christmas

People spend time thinking about what to give for Christmas, so gift-giving this time of year symbolizes their appreciation and love. Simple then is what the parents who would receive their gifts.

This is tradition, but remains a top gift item during Christmas because ham represents family.

It is only proper that when it comes to gift-giving, people give and receive the best hams there is. This is why CDO Foodsphere Inc., acknowledged to be most outstanding manufacturer of Christmas hams for the second year in a row, offers CDO Whole-Meat Ham, which has become a household brand for high quality and superior taste.

"After getting CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, consumers know that they have the best gift for their loved ones and special friends this Christmas," said Mabel dela Cruz, Asst. Brand Manager of CDO Foodsphere Inc.

The combination of superior taste, high quality and competitive price of the CDO Whole-Meat Ham gives the confidence to make CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham a top gift item this season," dela Cruz said. "Sure enough, CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham has more to flow down."

Dela Cruz said CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham is made from premium whole meat cuts, unlike other brands which use actually reformulated hams or those made from leftover trimmings from several pieces of meat.

She said buyers, who are familiar with the different types of hams, look for whole-meat hams, which is considered superior over reformulated hams, both in terms of ingredients and processes.

CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham is a traditional ham that is specially smoked, fully cooked, skinned to specifications of both and glazed with pineapple fully in syrup cut in Sectional Cheek. Hence it is ready-to-eat, she said.

Dela Cruz said CDO Foodsphere which manufactures the CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham, prides itself in using raw materials, ingredients, and processes used are in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

A proud of CDO Holiday Whole-Meat Ham's superiority over other hams is the recognition bestowed by the Consumers Union of the Philippines (CUP) to CDO Foodsphere as the outstanding Christmas ham manufacturer during the 19th Annual National Consumers Awards (ANCA) held in October this year.

For more information about whole-meat hams, contact 306-1111.

Malou Ramos-Tumpay

SHE JUST DID IT

Actress Jennifer Aniston wears a dress and nothing else—on the January cover of GQ magazine. The 39-year-old actress sexy down and shows off her toned and tanned body over on the headline "It's just as sexy, Jennifer Aniston getting hotter." AP

Mumbai gunmen planned rooftop standoff

MUMBAI, INDIA—THE SOLE GUNman captured in last month's Mumbai attacks had originally intended to seize hostages and outline demands in a series of dramatic calls to the media, according to his confession obtained on Saturday by The Associated Press.

Mohammed Ajmal Kasab said he and his pistol-, rifle- and grenade-armed dozens of people in the city's main train station, had planned a rooftop standoff, but abandoned the plan because they could not find a suitable building, the statement to police says.

Kasab's seven-page confession, given to police over repeated interrogations, offers chilling new details of the three-day rampage through India's commercial capital that left 164 people plus nine of the 10 gunmen dead.

He said the assault, which started on Nov. 26, was initially set for Sept. 27, though he does not explain why it was delayed. The gunmen had been told by their handlers to carry out the attacks in the morning or evening when the station is teeming with commuters.

After receiving Hindi, Kasab said the gunmen headed to the train station by taxi in the evening.

"Ismail and myself went to the commuter toilet, took out the weapons from our sacks, loaded them, came out of toilet and started firing indiscriminately toward the passengers," Kasab told police.

As police officers opened fire, the two militants retaliated with grenades before entering another part of the station and cautiously shooting more commuters.

The men then marched for a building with a rooftop where they had been told to hold hostages and call a contact named Chacha, whom Kasab identified as Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the suspected mastermind behind the attacks who has been detained by Pakistani authorities.

Chacha, which means "uncle" in Hindi, would supply phone numbers for media outlets and specify what demands the two should make.

"This was the general strategy described by our masters," Kasab said.

Taking luxury fire from police, the two had trouble finding a "suitable building" and ran amok in a hospital-like section for an apartment building. There, they searched for hostages and traded more gunfire with security forces. It's unclear if they ever held hostages.

When they left, a police van pulled up and the two ruled to take shelter behind a bush during the shootout. Kasab was hit in the hand as Khan returned fire.

"They got injured and the firing from their side stopped," he said.

Police have confirmed the two were carrying top police officials, including the head of the antiterror squad who was killed.

In the confession, Kasab, 21, described his conversion from an unruly street criminal to a loyal soldier for Lashkar-e-Taiba, the militant group banned by Pakistan in 2002 and blamed by India in the attacks.

He came to the organization last year while looking to buy guns to commit robberies after quitting a low-paying job as a catering hardware. The search led him to several Lashkar "trails" in a bazaar in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi, he said.

Kasab said on to receive rigorous training in weapons handling and other skills, attending at least an Lashkar camps and visiting his prospective during breaks, he said. AP

A bold lawyer cheats the best of investors

NEW YORK—MARC S. DREIER KNEW the 40th floor conference room of Skadden Brady well. He had been in it many times as a trusted lawyer for the company's founder.

So nothing seemed amiss when he showed up one afternoon in October and told a receptionist he had a meeting with Eric Dinter, people associated with Dinter say.

Dreier was elegantly dressed, as always, the people said. He had three people with him. The receptionist attested the group past her desk. They were taking there, visible inside the glass-walled room, a few minutes later when the host, Steven M. Cherniak, happened to walk by.

Cherniak would later tell people at the company how surprised he had been to see Dreier in fact, he had not scheduled any meeting with the lawyer that day, and he had no idea what Dreier was up to.

But people there gave little thought to Dreier's odd visit until November, when the company's founder, Sheldon M. Solow, received a disturbing call. The caller wanted to let Solow know that Dreier had offered him the chance to buy promissory notes that had been issued by the company, people associated with the firm said.

They were fake notes, said shortly thereafter, lawyers for Solow Realty—different lawyers—went in touch with federal authorities, reporting their suspicions that Dreier might be engaged in financial fraud.

Since that morning trip, federal authorities have been tracking what they describe as a brazen swindle of some of New York's current investors by one of New York's most accomplished lawyers. Dreier has been charged in connection with fraud and attempted fraud in the United States and Canada, and is being held without bail in Manhattan.

In court last week, prosecutors said an early count put the money missing at $300 million, most of it lost by hedge funds and other investors who had bought promissory notes that were for nor fiction. AFP

Indian Navy nabs 23 pirates in Gulf of Aden

NEW DELHI—THE INDIAN NAVY CAPTURED 23 pirates who threatened a merchant vessel in the restive waters of the Gulf of Aden and a German naval helicopter thwarted another attack on Saturday as it fought to keep Somalia's seafaring bandits at bay, officials said.

The successive swoops date before Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was to ask the United Nations to authorize "all necessary measures" against increasingly bold Somalian pirates operating in one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

An Indian Navy ship, the INS Mysore, was escorting merchant ships in waters off Yemen's coast on Saturday when it received a distress call from seamen on board the MV Ishi, who said they were being fired on by two boats that were approaching her.

The Mysore and its helicopter sped to the scene, and the pirate boats attempted to escape when they saw them, according to a statement from the Indian government.

Indian Navy commandos boarded the pirate boats and seized "a substantial cache of arms and equipment," including seven AK-47 assault rifles, three machine guns, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and other weapons, the statement said. They also found a GPS receiver and other equipment. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirico

China, Japan, S. Korea unite to fight crisis

BEIJING/FUKUOKA, JAPAN—ASIAN POWERS Japan, China and South Korea put aside decades of animosity on Saturday and agreed to work together to tackle the global financial crisis battering their economies.

Policy makers worldwide scrambled for new initiatives to stem the fallout from the biggest financial turmoil in 80 years, with the White House weighing emergency funding to avert the collapse of the US auto industry and Europe agreeing on Friday to a 200 billion euro ($260 billion) stimulus plan.

In a further blow to investors, Ecuador said it would slash more than 30 percent off the nominal value of its foreign debt, a day after declaring a default.

China, whose evident resources helped fuel the years of global boom before the bust, said reasonable is there a host of challenges. It was still aiming for growth of above 8 percent next year, a senior official said.

In the Japanese city of Fukuoka, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak pledged not to create new trade barriers over the next 12 months and backed efforts to bolster a regional web of currency swaps.

At a historic summit, the leaders promised to work more closely together, ending fifty decades of rivalry and animosity between the three neighbors.

"Cooperation between ... our three countries is necessary for Northeast Asia will have vast significance as the financial crisis has a big impact on economies around the world," Wen said.

In Beijing, the chair of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, Liu Mingkang, said potential problems facing the world's fourth-largest economy included falling prices and, after years of attracting vast sums of offshore funds, capital outflows.

"China's economic and financial situation merits no optimism and Chinese banks will face more challenges in 2009," he told a financial conference in Beijing.

A slowing pace of expansion, though it would still be the envy of most countries, would endanger social stability in China as it would be hard to create enough jobs for the millions of people moving to cities from farms every year, he said.

Liu also said China was headed for deflation after both consumer and producer price rises slowed sharply last month.

Producer inflation, which slumped to 2.0 percent growth in the year to November from a 6.8 percent reading in the previous month, was set to weaken markedly again in December, he said.

Kazuhisa Ogawa

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa warned bondholders he would offer them much reduced terms in a coming debt restructuring, saying current terms were immoral.

Big concerns about the US auto industry resumed after President George W. Bush failed to persuade senators in his own party to support a $14 billion auto bailout on Friday.

Fears without the prospect of an industry-damaging bankruptcy at one of the major US automakers, Japanese post Toyota Motor Corp. was likely to post an operating loss of about $1 billion in the six months to March, Japanese media said. Reuters

Editor Tobbytric S. Malonzo • Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

SPORTS

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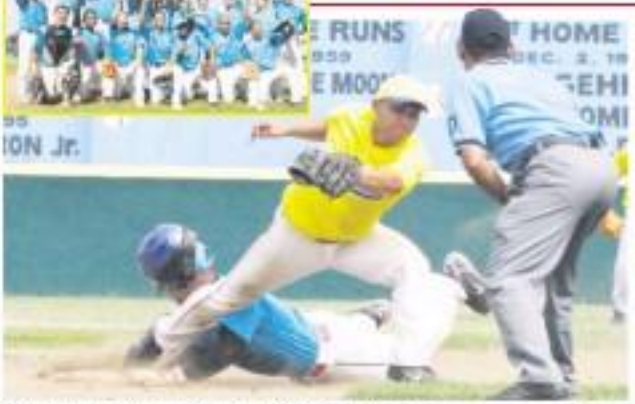
■ Hawks end Cavs' run at 11 wins /A31



CEBU Dolphins' Jordan Ovalos slides safely to second base off Olongapo Unlibom' Ramboi Serva.

Orillana clinches it for Cebu

Dolphins grab BP title

By Marc Anthony Reyes

JOSEPH ORILLANA PITCHED A FOUR-HIT SHUTOUT AND DIRected the top-seeze play that gave Cebu a 3-0 triumph over Olongapore and the Baseball Philippines Series 4 championship yesterday at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

The lanky, 6-foot-3 Orillana laid down a perfect bunt with one out and second baseman Andrei Ovalos zoomed home with what turned out to be the winning run on top of the fifth inning.

"It was really a gamble but I have faith in Joseph [Orillana] because I know he hates well," said Cebu team manager Isaac Bacsain. "I'm glad we took the risk."

Cebu completed a two-game sweep of Olongapo in the series to collect its second championship with Orillana also bagging his second Most Valuable Player award.

"I don't know what to say" said Orillana in Filipino, his shirt still dripping wet from the ice juice poured on him during the victory celebration by his teammates.

"It was teamwork."

Olongapo, which took an early 1-0 lead in Game 1 of the title series before Cebu came up with four runs in the last two frames, finished second for the second straight tournament.

The Guilliboys, seniors up to five x 3 champ Olongapo four months ago, managed to put the potential tying and winning run on base after two outs in the eighth inning.

Losing pitcher Darwin dela Calzada, batting last, smashed a double to right and then Orillana fanned a weak to Olongapo leadoff batter Andrei Cayagan.

But Orillana completed his heroic role for the day by forging high to catch a liner by Brenon Lango on a 1-2 count to end the threat.

Orillana capped his big day by fanning the power-hitting Alko Ramos for the game's final out.

They all deserve us to be the champions," said Bacsain, coach of the Southeast Asian Games softball champion RP-Sta Rosa, of the Dolphins, who also ruled the Series 2 tournament.

Dela Calzada actually had a scare when Orillana came to bat in the fifth after Cevilla had reached third on a wild pitch and an error by second baseman Ray dela Cruz.

On a 1-1 count, Orillana executed a perfect bunt down the line, his bunted hit borne, sliding in the plate between the legs of Olongapo catcher Edmar del Rosario to break the scoreless tie.

Movie star Richard Gomez struggled out, but was forced out at second before Nico Ochoa struck out swinging.

Dela Calzada went on to finish with four hits, pitching without relief for Orillana.

The key proved to be the five-run Olongapo rally in what turned out to be the final game of the series, which started after a controversial pitch by the visiting Jun Francisco Gozon who pitches Geno Espiritu, an American whose parents are Filipino.

Meanwhile, Vic Sioson of Batangas won the Best Hitter award with a batting average of .323 from 44 at bats—23 of them were across the ballpark.

Honored as the Best Pitcher was Batangas' Vladimir Egata who had 25 strikeouts, 12 base on balls, 25 runs allowed and 11 earned runs in 47 innings.

Tie-breaker 8-1
[illegible]
[illegible]

Tañamor batters Pole, gains World Cup finals

VETERAN HARRY TAÑAMOR pounded Lukasz Skurzynski of Poland from the opening bell to pull off a 12-4 win late Saturday and barge into the light flyweight finals of the tough, by-invitation-only World Cup in Moscow.

The 31-year-old Tañamor, a silver medalist in the 2007 Seoul Olympiad, is also a veteran of the Beijing Olympics, which he bowed out of in the opening round.

Tañamor now faces the division's top favorite, Cuba's Yampier Hernandez, who defeated Kyrgyzstan's Bobur Zakhyan 13-3.

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Make Every Day Exciting

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SBP-Smart nat'l five off for China Invt'l

By Jane Manano

THE SAMAHANG BASKETBALL ng Pilipinas-Smart national team left for China's Guangxi province yesterday to compete in the 1st China-Asean CBD Men's Basketball International tournament.

SBP executive director Noli Eala said the Dec. 17 to 21 tournament is the maiden test for the 12-man squad which is being prepared for a possible stint in the 2011 Southeast Asian Games.

Eala said the team will try to gain enough exposure for the 2011 Fiba Asia Men's Championship, the qualifier for London.

The players handpicked by national team project director Ricky Dionisio will also play in the Southeast Asian Games next year and the 2010 Asian Games.

Part of the 23-man pool formed by Dionisio, the team is composed of PBA's Mac Baracael, Mark Barroca and Jil Caseldog, UAAP's Marvin Ardiente, UP's Martin Reyes and Jaypee Rana, San Beda's Ogie Menor and UST's Dylan Abalos, Ateneo's Greg Slaughter, Oklahoma City's Jewel Thompkins and Joey Dean of Mississippi University in Kansas.

Laguna bets hang on

Swimmers continue POF assault; GenSan rallies

By Jane Manano

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Laguna continued its medal onslaught in swimming while picking up victories in judo, gymnastics and athletics to keep the overall lead in the 2nd Philippine Olympic Festival National Championships here.

Aileen Horvano added two more golds to Laguna's haul by topping the 200-meter and 400-meter freestyle for girls' 13-15 years old as the reigning Southern Tagalog Qualifying Games title grabber ran more gold medals in the pool.

Matching the twin golds of the 13-year-old Horvano, who now has eight victories overall, was Dalarong Pambansa multiple-gold winner Banjo Barja, who prevailed in the 100m and 200m breaststroke.

Marinduque took the eight victories overall while Iloilo won its first gold, three victories in the track, three swimming and all-around events.

Nilles Dacera ruled the 200m and 400m freestyle while her brothers Lamin and Omar Philip topped the same events to their respective age categories in the pool as General Santos raised its medal haul to 29 golds, 28 silvers and 16 bronzes.

Dominique Caballo is capped Cavitena's medal surge for the day by beating Zamboanga's Joseph Dominguez with a 13.26-meter winning attempt in the men's triple jump of the event sponsored by Globe, Accel, Pepsi and Philippine Sports Commission, AMA Computer University, National Museum Writer and Creativity Lounge.

Laguna backed Cavitena's surge to the top by sweeping eight golds in artistic gymnastics, four in track and field and two in judo.

Cantimanga, bronze by Cavitena in the Mindanao qualifying, chose to join Olympic Alexis Mendoza in the 55 kilogram-and, Joanna Dennis (-48kg), Frederick Turner (-60kg) and Ellen Tumaon (-63kg).

Lenard del Rosario, whose gained a gymnastics gold through Lorelyn Badilla, swamped Iriboan Ocampo and Cagayan De Oro's Jo Ann Bernal in archery against Cagayan Valley in the finals.

Meanwhile, organizers of the meet—the talent identification and sports development program of the Philippine Olympic Committee—announced all the games of Olympic host Archery and Muaythai Olympic for Bidding ineligible players in beach volleyball.

As a result, Iloilo-Iloilo picked up the gold by downing Valenzuela, Pakistan, 25-13, 25-23, 25-22. Rivers Negros settled for the bronze medal.

Negros del Norte escaped with a 28-24, 25-22 victory over Cagayan City in the girls' division to reach the gold-medal match.

ARCHERY: Aileen Amit first bow arrows in the Pre-elimination round in Cagayan de Oro City.

Medals	G	S	B
Laguna	29	28	16
Gen. Santos	16	20	16
Manila	7	8	7
Davao City	7	6	7
Bataan	7	5	5
Makati	7	4	5
Iriga	7	4	3
Cavite City	6	3	3
Pagadian	5	3	0
Mandaluyong	4	3	2
Iloilo	3	4	3
Davao City	3	4	1
Cebu	3	3	3
Iligan	3	3	1
Olongapo	3	2	1
Cagayan de Oro	3	1	3
Puerto Princesa	3	1	4
Tag. City (PVL)	2	4	1
La Union	2	4	1
Cavite	2	3	1
Lanao Del N.	2	1	1

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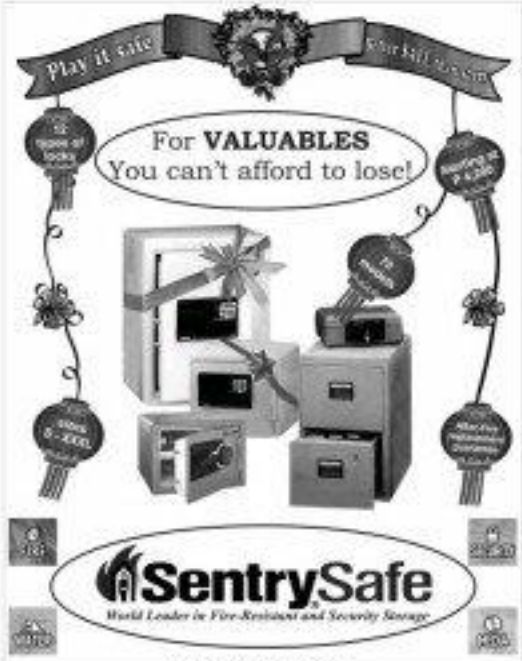

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Paeng's lament

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñiguez

DESPITE ITS WORLDWIDE POPULARITY, bowling will find it hard to be included in future Olympic Games.

"Bowling in the Olympics is facing rough sailing," said six-time world bowling champion Paeng Nepomuceno. "But I'm hoping my fingers crossed that sometime, someday, the IOC (International Olympic Committee) will include the sport in the Olympic calendar."

Only recently, the 51-year-old, 6-foot-2 Nepomuceno was named by the Bowlers Journal International—America's oldest, most prestigious bowling publication—in its all-time list of the Top 100 bowlers, the only Asian in the roster.

According to the editors of Bowlers Journal International, "this prestigious honor has been bestowed upon bowlers whose successes have deeply influenced and changed the bowling world."

The United States Bowling Congress earlier named to the Filipino bowling great to help its international bowling governing arm and to bolster the strength of member-federations within the world's bowling governing body, the Federation Internationale des Quilleurs or FIQ.

Named by the USBC as International Bowling Ambassador, Nepomuceno, who won the World Cup four times, is the US-BC's busiest coach/instructor the past few years.

Not many people know it, but Paeng has trained and certified coaches in Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines. He has also conducted clinics and exhibition matches in Milan, Italy, and some cities in Australia.

A child of Parañaque, the humble and soft-spoken Nepomuceno said: "I'm happy to be living my dream for bowling and would like to share this keen accomplishment with all my kababayan. I'm proud of that and I'd like to share it with my countrymen and all those who support me to advance the cause."

Paeng is the only Filipino athlete in recent memory to have been honored by three different Philippine presidents. On Jan. 3, President Macapagal-Arroyo conferred on him the much-coveted Order of Lakandula with the Special Class of Champion for Life. In 1999, President Estrada bestowed on him the Legion of Honor for his extraordinary achievements. And in 1984, President Marcos awarded Paeng the Presidential Medal of Merit, the highest award given to a civilian by Malacañang.

A devotee of the Mother of Perpetual Help, Nepomuceno is married to Salve "Pinky" Payot, only daughter of former Assemblyman Jose "Pepit" Payot. Paeng is the son of bowling coach Amped and former beauty queen Dolly Nepomuceno.

The World Cup is the highest attainable achievement for bowlers. It brings together some 80 national champions from all over the world from a field of over 100 million competitive bowlers.

With the huge number of competitors, the odds are 100 million to 1 to become a World Cup champion. Only Terengganu's Azlan Simon came closest to the Filipino's four World Cup titles, with the Terengganu ruling two World Cup championships.

Paeng also emerged No. 1 in two exercise tests conducted by the sports medicine center of the Philippine Sports Commission, a clear proof of his incredible staying power.

The tests given to national athletes were held under the supervision of renowned Dr. Tyrone Bryce.

A few years ago, Nepomuceno was personally awarded by former IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch with the IOC President Trophy. The highest award for sports given to Pinoy was, particularly important because bowling is still not recognized as an Olympic sport.

Makati 'Sabong for a Cause' on

THE 20-FIGHT, 3-COCK ELIMINATION ROUND of the annual Mendiola Gathering for a Cause 1-Cock Derby fires off today with more than P2 million in guaranteed prize at stake at the Makati Coliseum.

"We finally re-set the derby. Held every year at the Mendiola venue in Quiapo, Paeng, the organizer was forced to Makati because the site is undergoing renovation. Mendiola will again donate the derby proceeds to worthwhile charity projects.

'Parnaiso' derby at SJC today

THE SECOND ELIMINATION ROUND OF THE P2.5-million "Parnaiso Derby" 3-cock derby gets going today at the San Juan Coliseum.

More than 100 cockers and gamefowl breeders have already signed up for this event.

Two more rounds will be held on Dec. 17 and 20. Qualifiers will advance to the finals on Dec. 22. The champion will earn P500,000 for champion while the 2-runners will get P50,000 each.

oooooooooooooooooooooooong way.

Draw for Liverpool, Man U, Arsenal; Barca wins

LONDON—LIVERPOOL CAPTAIN STEVEN Gerrard's double rekindled a 2-2 draw against Hull on Saturday, but a third straight stalemate at Anfield cast further doubts on the Premier League leaders's title credentials.

"If we want to stay on top of the table we have to take these points from these games," manager Rafa Benitez said. "I am very disappointed, everyone is disappointed."

Defending champion Manchester United was held to a frustrating 0-0 draw at Tottenham to remain six points adrift of Liverpool, which tops the standings by two points, but can be leapfrogged Sunday if Chelsea beats West Ham.

Arsenal's fading title ambitions were dealt a further blow when Italian fullback Antonio Aliadiere equalized to clinch a 1-1 draw for Middlesbrough, allowing Aston Villa to dislodge their host's fourth place by beating Bolton, 4-1.

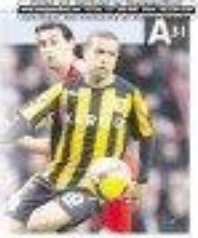
Hull was tipped as a candidate for relegation when it entered its debut top-flight campaign, but strengthened its hold on sixth place with a point at Liverpool.

"We have done very well but it is too early to start making bold statements about Europe just yet," Hull manager Phil Brown said. "I am just delighted with an outstanding performance."

Sunderland climbed out of the relegation zone with a 4-0 victory over bottom-place West Bromwich Albion in the League Championship. Wolverhampton Wanderers maintained its grip on the lead with a 3-0 victory over Barnsley.

In Madrid, Samuel Eto'o said Lionel Messi scored in the final 30 minutes to give Barcelona a 2-0 win over Real Madrid, spoiling the Spanish league return of the defending champion's new coach Juande Ramos.

Barcelona's win watched by over 86,000 spectators at a new Camp Nou extended its unbeaten league run to 14 games—12 of which it has won—and stretched its lead over its archrival to 12 points. AP



LIVERPOOL'S Alvaro Arbeloa (left) vies with Hull City's Dickson Etuhu

Hawks end Cavaliers' run at 11

ATLANTA—MIKE WOBY HAD a message for all those ass-breakout Hawks fans in Atlanta.

"I didn't come to watch LeBron James," Bibby said. "I came to play."

Bibby scored 24 points, Marvin Williams hit the clinching free throws, and Atlanta snapped the Cleveland Cavaliers' 11-game winning streak with a 97-92 victory Saturday night.

James had 33 points and nine assists for the Cavs, who overcame a 14-point deficit in the third quarter to take a 90-88 lead early in the fourth on Mo Williams' layup.

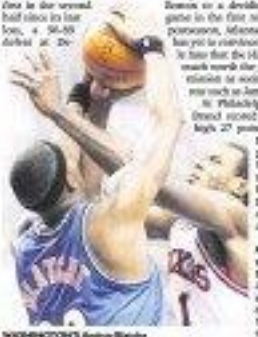
The deficit was Cleveland's first in the second half since its last loss, a 98-88 defeat at Detroit on Nov. 19. The Cavs were trying for the first 12-game winning streak in franchise history, having won 11 in a row four times, the last in 1994-95.

"We can't win 'em all," James said. "We didn't expect to win every last game and go 79-3. We played hard. It was just a matter that they got more stops in the end than we did."

After eight lead changes over a six-minute span in the fourth quarter, Atlanta never trailed after Bibby made it 84-83 with 4:40 remaining.

The Hawks are trying to build their fan support after making the playoffs last season for the first time in nine years. Despite taking eventual NBA champion Boston to a deciding seventh game in the first round of the postseason, Atlanta seemingly has yet to convince many Hawks fans that the Hawks are on enough solid footing for an all-out mission to acquire a superstar such as James.

In Philadelphia, Elton Brand scored a season-high 27 points, leading Philadelphia over Washington, 104-89, in Tony DiLeo's coaching debut. AP



WASHINGTON'S Andray Blatche (left) and Samuel Dalembert of Philadelphia fight for the rebound.

Tim Clark tops Australian Open via playoff

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—SOUTH African Tim Clark scrambled par from a greenside bunker to beat Matthew Goggin on the first hole of a playoff to win the $1.15-million Australian Open golf tournament on Sunday.

Clark, who shot a 5-under 67 in the final round for a total of 9-under 279, finished his final round two shots behind co-course-mate David Smail at the Royal Sydney Golf Club.

New Zealand's Smail (70) double-bogeyed the 16th and 18th holes to crash out of contention and Clark, sitting calm and chips in the clubhouse, had to return to the practice tee to prepare for a playoff with Australian Goggin (69). Smail finished in a three-way tie for third place. AP

STILL THE CHAMPION Ukrainian world champion Wladimir Klitschko beats Ukrainian Hasim Rahman during their IBF, IBO and WBO heavyweight title fight in Mannheim, Germany. Klitschko retained his IBF title via a seventh-round stoppage.

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Army booters bag crown

By Cedell P. Tayao

ARMY ACCOUNTED FOR NUMBERS AND BLANKED Gilligan's, 3-0, last night to claim the first PhilSports Premiere League title at the PhilSports pitch in Pasig City.

Ricardo Bertie and substitute Arnel Romero re-warded the Armymen's hard work with goals.

Bertie struck a sublime 25-yard free kick that left Gilligan's keeper Jayjee Gregorio rooted on his spot in the 26th minute.

"We dominated the game because we headed up on the attacking third," said Army coach Richard Cala, whose team finished the tournament undefeated. "The key was Bertie and Chuck Cornel's control of midfield. *Pierre Sangre sa iba ito.* (That's champions.)"

Army almost doubled the advantage at the stroke of halftime when Relan Bravante was pulled out by a Dexter Carough ball, but Gregorio was up in the task this time to point away the effort.

Gilligan's, boosted by reinforcements Fenario Castillo, Joel Bello-Alle and former national team defender Jessie Cordova, came out of the break with renewed confidence but Relan Guevara, the league's top forward, was let down by Phillip Caballero.

Under pressure from Caballero, Guevara dribbled into the box to get on the end of a Glenny Subrenuma cross only for him to disappointingly scuff his shot wide in the 54th minute.

With Wilmer De la Cruz marauding down the left, Army created two more chances with Romero finally sealing Gilligan's endeavour in the 70th minute.

Rufino, Batangas boss Mendiola, 2-0, to end up third.

Hot-closing Juvic 6th in Cambodia

XIEN REAP, CAMBODIA—Juvic Pagunsan, birdied the last three holes to zip a four-under-par 68 that lifted him into a tie for sixth place in the $300,000 Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open tuesday. Thongchai Jaidee by-ple shots.

The lean 5-foot long-hitting Pagunsan, who also shot a 68 Saturday after-earlier rounds of 70-69, finished in the top 10 for the first time since June with a 273 total like Korean Park Jin-hoon $69.

The shotmaker from Bacolod picked up $9,050, his biggest paycheck on the Asian Tour since a runner-up finish in the Thailand PGA Championship in June.

Mars Pacay and Antonio Macabenta closed with identical 71s and shared 36th with seven others at 279. Each earn $3,134.

Antonio Lascuña carded 31,710 for finishing at 286 after a 73 while Arnone Dellatorre (76-200) ended for $1,110.

Thongchai, who dedicated his second straight win to his newly born second child, produced a superb 66 for a 20-under-par 264 total. He pocketed $47,550.

Lam Chih Bing of Singapore signed off with a 65 for a 270 total to take second place ahead of Thailand's Chanadit Winphol, who had a 272 total.

Seven days earlier in Ho Chi Minh City, Thongchai ended his run-your side drought with a win at the Asian Tour. *Asian Time News*

PhilCycling holds key polls Jan. 16 at Amoranto

CLUBS WANTING TO JOIN THE ELECTIONS of PhilCycling will undergo careful scrutiny before being declared eligible or even to the polls of the national federation slated next month.

PhilCycling president Jose Lina announced this Saturday in a meeting at the Tagaytay International Convention Center.

The federation is set to submit pertinent papers...voting membership, waiver of election, constitution and by-laws, among others—to the Philippine Olympic Committee in the next few days, he said.

Close to 100 cycling clubs from all over the country are expected to join the quadrennial elections on Jan. 16 at the Amoranto Multi-Purpose Hall in Quezon City.

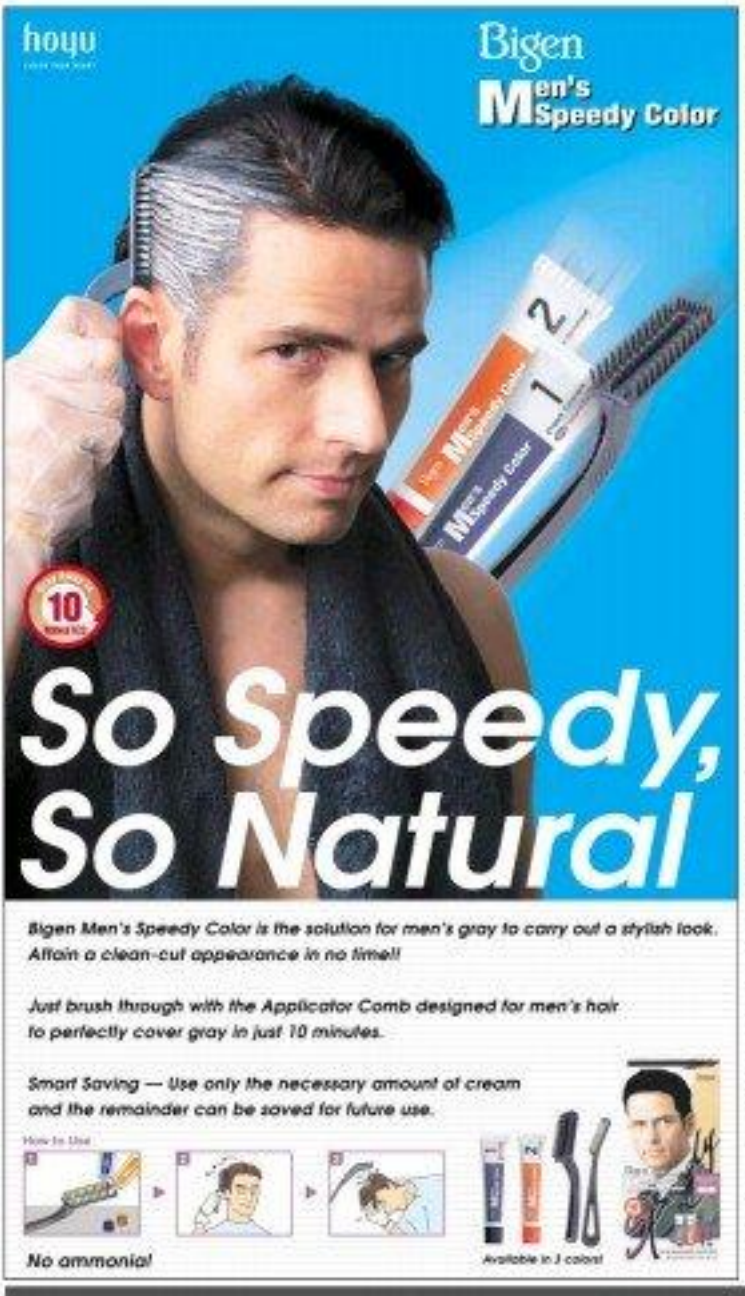
Fifteen members of the board will be elected in the polls. They will then elect from among themselves the officers of the board.

A national cross-country, 40-km road racing and mountain bike will be held in Tagaytay City on Jan. 18 and its track in the morning of Jan. 16 at the Amoranto velodrome.

Attending Saturday's meeting were Oscar "Boying" Rodriguez, a councilor from Davao City who led the representatives from the Visayas, and Ponciano Gonzales and Jun Palacio, who headed the clubs from Mindanao.

Each region was represented by Talisay Vice Mayor Jumbo Ramoran, while 1974 Tour champion Modesto Bonoy represented Pangasinan. Tagaytay Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino headed the city representation.

With Lina in Saturday's meeting were board members Paquito Ylarde, Jun Lumabao, Cesar Cavalida, Albert Espiritu, Jerry Cantillig and Jojo Villa. Absent were Corsaldo Padilla Jr., Bernie Reyes and Antonio "Tat" Cruz, the television chair. *Cedell P. Tayao*



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Editor Raul C. Marcelo ■ Assistant Editor Connie S. Mariano

BUSINESS

BSP seen to slash policy rates

Banks expect quarter-point cut

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS IS WIDELY expected to slash its benchmark interest rates by 25 basis points (or a quarter of a percentage point) during its policy meeting on Thursday, as the faster-than-anticipated slowdown in inflation provides room to help perk up domestic economic growth.

Seven of 11 banks polled by the Inquirer on Friday said the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board would likely lower its overnight borrowing rate to 5.75 percent from 6 percent during the Thursday meeting. The five other respondents expected the central bank to keep its interest rates unchanged.

It will be the first time since January this year that the central bank is seen cutting its key interest rates in the aftermath of an inflation scare caused by skyrocketing food and fuel prices.

"There will be a 25-basis-point cut due to a better foreign exchange [environment] and inflation outlook is benign," said Roland Aveno, treasurer of Chinatrust (Philippines) Commercial Bank.

The country saw large net inflows of "hot money" or foreign investments in local stock, bonds and money market instruments in the last three months but market sentiment has recently improved given the seasonal surge in overseas Filipino remittances and the declining risk aversion among regional investors.

For its part, the BSP has announced an inflation target range of 3.5-5.5 percent for 2010, slower than the forecast range of 6-8 percent for next year.

"The inflation outlook has moderated with the decline in food and oil prices from peaks observed during the early part of the year. Demand-pull price pressures are also likely to ease following the expected moderation in domestic economic activity as a result of the global economic slowdown," the central bank said.

Also, indicators of inflation expectations have either leveled off or declined, given the BSP's previous monetary policy actions and assurances to keep inflation within range of target path, the central bank added.

The inflation target helps guide the public in their investment, wage and price decisions.

TALK TO US

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■ **BSP uncovers irregularities** in shuttered rural banks /B3

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DECEMBER

STOCK MARKET

Cautious trading seen

STOCK INVESTORS ARE LIKELY to remain cautious this week as they keep an eye for trading opportunities.

"With a number of days left before the market pauses for the Yuletide break, it seems fit to trade on this week range-while-waiting for long-term catalysts to cushion unexpected global economic slowdown in 2009," said Cirilo Dandoca, chief operating officer and head of research at online broker 2TradeAsia.com.

She said overseas markets could remain volatile this week as investors focus on a US Federal Open Market Committee meeting on interest rates on Dec. 16 and remain glued to a legislative deadlock in American Congress whether or not to rescue their vehicle industry.

"The Bush administration said it would step in to prevent a collapse of the auto industry and a massive loss of jobs.

"The market's initial reaction [to the failure of the US Congress to pass the auto bailout] will be negative but I think a package may be cooked up again when incoming US President's Barack Obama takes office," said ATR-Kim Eng Securities president Lorenzo Tan III.

The Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) rose 5.25 percent week-on-week to 1,883.14, led by gains in holding firms and property companies.

"Part of the support may have stemmed from expectations that domestic interest rates may reflect soon given the favorable decline in consumer prices last month," Candoca said. **Elisabeth Zoleta-Lazaro**

Spending our way out of crisis

AS THE WORLD'S MAJOR ECONOMIES sink even deeper into recession, pulling down with them practically all other economies big and small alike, frantic top-gear desperate shut government must take an active role in trying to stop the decline. Not even the most rabid free-enterprise advocates would argue that laissez faire or "hands off" is the way for governments to deal with the economy at this time. Governments instead are ways to combat to prevent a free fall, no question about that. The real question is on what exactly they must do, and how they could do it. In influencing the aggregate behavior of the economy, governments have two major instruments at their disposal, namely fiscal policy and monetary policy. Right now, it is fiscal policy that receives the brightest limelight, as coming up

NO FREE LUNCH

CORAZON J. DE LA PAZ

...monetary supplies...subsidy is what monetary policy is all about—but had little impact so far in the major economies.

Spending and taxing

Fiscal policy is executed through the combination of how governmental managers its spending and how it raises revenues to fund them. The principle involved are quite simple: Government influences demand for the economy's goods and services by being a direct buyer itself. It also influences overall body sales' spending (and, therefore, demand for the same goods and services) by collecting either more or less money, thereby leaving more or less of their disposable available for spending. Everything else equal, the more government spends, the stronger the demand for the products of the economy, and the more jobs and incomes are created. And everything else equal, the more the government taxes its people, the less disposable income they would have and the less their spending (and, therefore, demand for goods and services) would be. Therefore, the formula for making economy grow, and recover from a slowdown such as we're seeing today, is for the government to spend more, or tax less. Doing both, i.e., spending more while at the same time letting people have would be most potent. The obvious problem with this is that it leads government into deficit, forcing it to borrow to finance the higher spending. Depending on how much deficit the government already has, the tax-raising option may not be such a good idea.

Multiplier process

The key to the impact of government spending is the way a one-off expenditure by the government causes total production and incomes by several times the amount of the original expenditure. This is the so-called multiplier effect. If the government spends P100 million to build a new road, that amount turns into P100 million in total incomes received by economists, engineers, equipment suppliers, construction workers and others. But that's not the end of it. Those various people now have income to spend or save as they choose. Ignoring taxes, if people on average save P20 out of every additional P100 income they receive, then the original P100 million of governmental spending turns into a new round of P80 million in spending on various things such as food, clothing, appliances, etc. that those construction people normally spend their income on. And once someone's spending is someone else's income, that second round P80 million in income turns into a third round of spending amounting to P64 million, which becomes yet another round of incomes spurring yet another round of spending, and so on ad infinitum. In the end, the P100 million originally spent by the government creates five times as much (P500 million) total production and income. Mathematically, if the saving rate is 40 percent or 0.4, the multiplier works out to be one divided by that, or 2.5.

Spending effectively

The above implies that the lower the economy's saving rate, the stronger the multiplier effect of government spending. If people save only 10 percent of their additional incomes, the multiplier would be nine as much, or 10—the P100 million government spending above would generate P1 billion of new income! This is not to suggest that people should save less, as savings also fund the market for capital that is the lifeblood of production activities in the economy. But that is the subject of another article.

How can government maximize the effects of its spending? First off, it must be open on things and beneficial to society—more bridges as against new condo governmental officials, more hospitals as against fertilizer funds that don't get spent for fertilizers after all. Second, it must be spent in domestically produced goods and services to maximize the multiplier effect. If the money is spent on imported goods instead, the funds would promote much new

A Timely Investment for this Season!

Investing in today's times seems like a daunting proposition. The impact of the sub-prime crisis in the U.S. has caused the downfall of financial "giants" and has sent shockwaves across the world have dropped significantly in such a short period of time.

This has created an investment environment that is full of fear, doubt, and uncertainty. With such well-respected investment banks and institutions declaring bankruptcy or needing a bail-out plan, it is no surprise that today's ordinary investors are afraid that their own investments will fail.

"In my adult lifetime, I don't think I've ever seen people as fearful economically as they are right now," said the richest man in the world, 78-year old Warren Buffet, Chairman & CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, and considered to be the world's greatest investor, in an exclusive interview with broadcast journalist Charlie Rose last October.

"They have seen the credit markets seize up. They've gotten worried about money-market funds," he explains further. "They've seen 8% of the bank deposits of the United States get moved within the last couple of weeks from institutions that they thought were fine a few months ago to other institutions."

"They're not wrong to be worried," he concluded.

The ordinary Filipino investor has not been spared from the effects of this global financial crisis.

As such, Filipinos right now are looking for an investment instrument that will give them the chance to safely maximize their hard-earned money but without the risk of having their money dwindle to nothing, especially in these market conditions. In short, Filipinos want to protect their investment while making their money grow.

What Filipinos investors need right now is an investment that is "*Locked & Loaded*."

To help address the current needs of the Filipino investor, AXA Philippines, one of the largest and the fastest-growing life insurer in the country today, is offering its *Locked & Loaded* capital-protected investment for a limited time only.

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For a minimum single investment of as low as only P200,000, *Locked & Loaded* offers investors the secure and easy opportunity to protect their assets while enjoying unlimited growth potential. Due to the popularity of this promo, Locked & Loaded has been extended until December 17, 2008 only.

Give yourself the best Christmas gift by protecting your investments and your loved ones today — get *Locked & Loaded*! For more information on *Locked & Loaded*, call the AXA Philippines Customer Care Hotlines at (02) 3015-AXA (292) or (02) 3231-AXA (292), or visit the AXA Philippines website at www.axa.com.ph. You may also ask about *Locked & Loaded* from a Financial Adviser/Executive in any of the AXA or Metrobank branches near you.

IC report: AXA No. 1 in VLIP

Latest reports from the Insurance Commission website showcase AXA Philippines' dominance in the variable life insurance category with a reported premium income of PhP15.1 billion, almost double its PhP7.9 billion output in 2006, and a market share of over 42%. The only company to have posted a variable premium income over PhP5.2 billion for 2007, AXA Philippines introduced variable life insurance products in 2001. Variable life insurance, the new breed of life insurance products, invests a portion of the premiums in bonds, equities and money market funds.

The upsurge was attributed mainly to the insurance company's aggressive 40% growth in total premium income in 2007. AXA Philippines also reported an increase in overall market share to 12% from 10% the previous year. Considered the fastest growing life insurer in the country, AXA nearly tripled its business in the past two years and broke into the top two spots of the total premium income rankings, surpassing some of the most established insurers in the Philippines.

The Insurance Commission rankings, which are based on premium income, show that the life insurance industry grew by 33.8% in 2007 with a total of P74.1 billion versus the P55.4 billion it totaled in 2006. Growth in the industry was spurred by the increased contribution of the variable life insurance category which now accounts for nearly half (48%) of total premium income, a huge increase considering that the category only contributed 27% last year.

BSP uncovers irregularities in shuttered rural banks

Loans without collateral, diversion of funds

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has uncovered certain irregularities—such as the granting of loans without collateral and documentation or use of bank funds to pay for obligations of affiliated personal corporations—in some of the shuttered banks affiliated with the Legacy group, a central bank report said.

The BSP last week shut down and placed under the PDIC's receivership seven more banks affiliated with the Legacy group, saying the lenders recently obtained loans that exposed them to risky contract provisions against insolvent banks.

In most of the banks already placed under PDIC receivership, the BSP found documentary evidence that a large amount of questionable loans were granted to borrowers without collateral and without adequate documentation, the report disclosed.

"The loan documents were not properly filled out, the loan applications forms had no supporting collateral parties, thus, the person or persons responsible for the grant cannot be ascertained, the addresses of the alleged borrowers were not stated, there were no credit investigation reports to support the financial capacity of the borrowers to serve as basis for the grant and most of all, the signatures appearing in the loan documents were doubtful," the report noted.

Among the companies which were identified as beneficiaries of the questioned and unauthorized loans were Legacy Mutual and One Card Co., Inc.

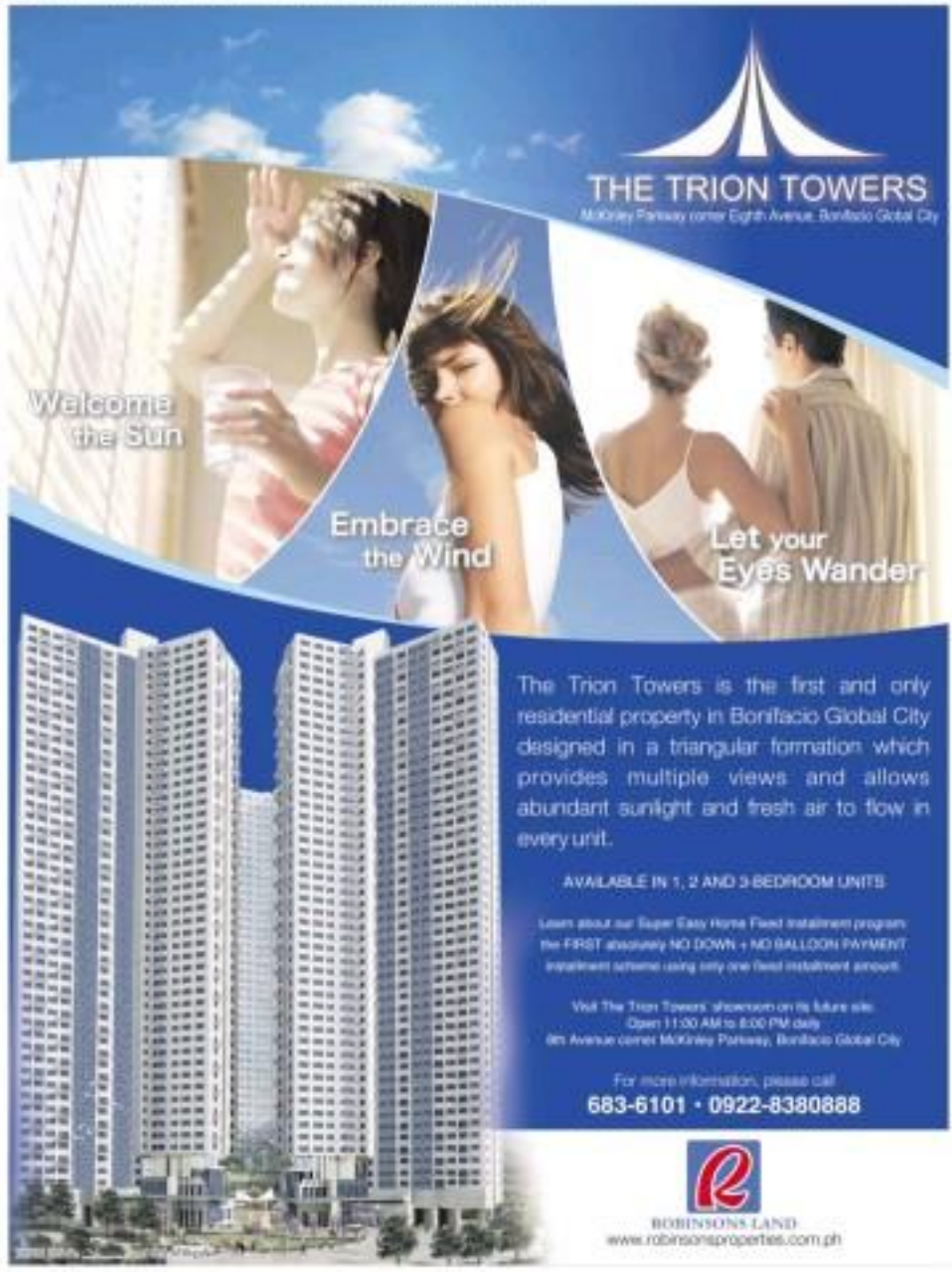
The BSP report also cited instances that bank funds were being used to pay for the obligations of pre-need companies identified or related to the Legacy group. But it was unable to appear that the payments were granted by the bank or loans.

The report noted that the use of bank funds to pay for obligations of Legacy companies runs a "clear case of conflict of interest provision" punishable under the Revised Penal Code. But the banks already placed under PDIC receivership, the PDIC as liquidator or receiver was cited as the proper party to file the criminal complaints.

The seven Legacy-affiliated banks (withdrawn) by the BSP last week were Bank of East Asia based in Cebu; First Interstate Bank in Tacloban; Philippine Countryside Rural Bank in Cebu; Rural Bank of Pantabangan; Rural Bank of San (Negros Oriental); Filipino Pacific Bank (Cebu); Rural Bank of San Jose (Batangas); and Rural Bank of Nueva Caceres (Naga City).

"The Bangko Sentral has been monitoring these banks well before the global financial turmoil because of potentially adverse and unsound banking practices," the central bank said in a statement.

The seven unlicensed banks were part of a group that engaged the central bank in a legal battle that constrained the banking regulator from taking action based on the findings of deficiency submitted by its examiners. Earlier rulings by lower courts favored the banks' pleading for due process.



Eastern Telecom targets ecozones, industrial parks

By Riza T. Olchondra

EASTERN TELECOMMUNICATIONS Philippines Inc. said it would offer its services to about 600 ecozones and industrial parks in Southern Luzon when it completes its P1-billion fiber optic expansion project from Tagaytay to Batangas.

An official of Eastern Telecom said the project would service industrial parks and economic zones as it would traverse Tagaytay, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas, an area where many business process outsourcing companies and multinationals are relocating to take advantage of cost savings amid the global financial crisis.

"We will provide connectivity to more than 600 ecozones and industrial parks along the route where the (project) will run," said Edwin Domingo, sales and business development head of Eastern Telecom.

He said this would help the company meet its revenue target of P1 billion by 2012.

Eastern Telecom posted revenue of P777 million in 2007. The company currently has about 15,000 customers, mostly enterprises and small and medium businesses.

The company is laying down a 240-kilometer fiber network that will reach Batangas, enabling Eastern to connect to its submarine cables.

"(This) will allow the company to maximize the submarine cables because of the additional bandwidth and it will allow us to offer greater bandwidth in other services and telecommunications companies," Domingo said.

Eastern Telecom said it was using new technology to drastically shorten the time and manpower needed for the project without sacrificing safety and quality.

The company employs the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) technology, which avoids breaking roads to dig deep trenches. Instead, HDD machines drill through a small hole underground with a detection device that guides the drill to a preset exit point. When normally taken weeks to dig traffic-stopping trenches has taken six hours with only an entry and exit hole needed.

Cable laying is also faster with a fiber blowing machine, which ensures that fiber optic cables are inserted through the underground holes safely in three to four hours instead of three weeks.

When Eastern Telecom switches on the expanded network, it will also set up a new business support system, which will improve the company's productivity by better organizing information through an integrated system for customer acquisition, customer care, billing and collections, service provisioning, product innovation and interconnection.

Also on the anvil for Eastern is to developing new products and value-added services such as Internet security and multipoint connectivity packages to develop fault-resistant networks.

P1-B expansion in Calabarzon area

FPHC says it has funds to settle maturing debts

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS Corp. (FPHC), the parent investment arm of Lopez Group, said it has the money to pay $26 million in debts falling due next year.

FPHC president Elpidio Ibañez said in a recent meeting with reporters that FPHC has enough funds to cover debt payments in 2009 and still have units of investments.

FPHC recently sold its 51-percent stake in toll road operator Manila North Tollways Corp. to Metro Pacific Investments Corp., the local flagship arm of diversified giant First Pacific Co. Ltd. of Indonesian billionaire Tito Soeryanto for FPHC around P6.2 billion in fresh cash.

Ibañez said that for maturing debts in 2010, FPHC was studying the possibility of refinancing. However, he did not provide more details.

In 2008, FPHC has $43.2 million in bonds and P37.03 million in peso-denominated notes falling due.

FPHC still also have to pay $47.9 million in bonds and P748.6 million in notes maturing in 2010.

This year, FPHC paid $20 million in floating rate debt notes.

FPHC and its parent Benpres Holdings Corp., both controlled by the Lopez family, sold their combined controlling stake in the toll road business for P12.2 billion to MTC.

Aside from reducing debt, Ibañez said that it might use a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the toll road business to fund investments of a joint venture through its investment arm, Beacon Electric Asset Holdings Ltd.

The venture operates a wafer-slicing plant at the First Philippine Industrial Park in Batangas that services the growing solar energy industry.

First Philec is the holding company of the manufacturing businesses of First Holdings, while SPM, is a subsidiary of solar technology provider SunPower Corp. of the United States.

The Batangas plant is the first large-scale silicon wafer-slicing facility in the Philippines and is envisioned to have 180 workforce soon producing 240 million wafers a year to support approximately 720 megawatts of solar energy.

BSP . . .

From page B1

more and consumption plans as well as in their spending and saving decisions over the medium term.

Expectations of an interest rate cut this week were boosted by a third month of sustained deceleration in average consumer price increase and the fall in the inflation rate to a single-digit level ahead of expectations in November.

The BSP has kept its policy rates unchanged at its meeting for overnight borrowing and 6 percent for overnight lending since October, the first monetary authority hiked up 9bb billion in additional liquidity in November when it cut the reserve requirement, the ratio of deposits and deposit substitutes that banks must keep in low-yielding and liquid assets with the central bank, to 19 percent from 21 percent.

The outlook on the central bank's potential interest rate cuts was also supported by the sharp slowdown in global oil prices, after oil prices behind the surge in inflation to 17-year highs earlier this year from a record-high of $147 a barrel in July. oil prices have been worsened as almost $80 given a rapidly deteriorating global demand.

Merchandise exports to Japan up 4.5%

By Roneal W. Gonzaga

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS TO JAPAN slowed down in the 10 months ending October, as the global financial crisis takes its toll on the Japanese economy.

Philippine exports to Japan from January to October grew by 4.5 percent to $7.56 billion, slower than the 9.4-percent growth posted a year ago.

The Japan External Trade Organization said Philippine imports from Japan rose by 11.2 percent to $6.56 billion.

In the same 10-month period, Japan's trade surplus with the Philippines has almost $1 billion or almost double the $536.47 million a year ago.

As of end-December, shipments from the Philippines accounted for 1.2 percent of Japan's total imports worth $643.57 billion.

Also, Japan's shipments to the Philippines accounted for 1.3 percent of Japan's total exports of $670.22 billion.

In October alone, exports to Japan was flat at $776.2 million while imports from Japan went down by 6.8 percent to $906.65 million.

This pared down Japan's October surplus on trade with the Philippines to $26.45 million or just about a quarter of the $113.6 million posted a year ago.

Asiatrust nets ₱125M

ASIATRUST BANK, a thrift bank that caters mainly to entrepreneurs and small and medium-scale industries, posted a net income of ₱125 million as the close of its fiscal year in June 2008. This, according to the bank, is a result of its effort to enhance profitability while improving business operations and risk management systems.

The competitive banking environment and the volatile financial market in the second semester of last fiscal year (January to June 2008) caused the thinning of spreads and decline in trading gains for Philippine banks.

In a year that saw the collapse of the US and global banking systems, Asiatrust has shown its resilience by posting a profit of ₱125-million.

Dominic L. Ong, president and CEO of Asiatrust Bank, underscored the bank's conservative and singular focus to help entrepreneurs become financially better off by providing relevant solutions to their unique needs, especially in these times.

No Free Lunch

From page B1

widely and more quickly across the economy, industries and sectors within the Philippines.

Governments all over are now being called upon to provide the needed "fiscal stimulus" to arrest a looming downward economic spiral. Additionally, they are called upon to do it in a coordinated way. If done properly the multiplier effect from all of this should eventually fill everywhere look up on their feet again. How long will it take? Dunf. hold your breath. Right now, no one is betting on a better 2009.

Comments are welcome at rgonzaga@interaksyon.com.ph.

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ROUNDUP

CLSA voted No. 1 brokerage

CLSA ASIA-PACIFIC MARKETS, an indepth, client brokerage tool investment group, has been voted the top research and sales brokerage in the Philippines in the annual Asiamoney All-Asia Brokers Poll 2008.

CLSA head of research Ahmad Ely was named the Philippines' No. 1 equity analyst; head of sales Alex Deuz was voted the country's No. 2 best salesperson, while country head Wes De Dios received the 2008 nod as the No. 3 best salesperson.

CLSA was voted No. 1 equity brokerage in the Philippines for country research and No. 1 for its coverage of key industry sectors—conglomerates, food, telecommunications, real estate, small caps, telecommunications and utilities.

Global fund managers also voted CLSA's sales, research and execution as the best in the Philippines, with Deuz being ranked the No. 1 salesperson for overall sales services, and for sales trading and best overall executive.

CLSA country head Bibi de Dios said the results reflected the commitment of her research and sales teams in providing clients bottom-up analysis of the Philippines' key listed companies and sectors, while ensuring seamless, value-added service.

BDO Capital bags awards

BDO CAPITAL and investment corp. has been named the San Domestic Investment Bank and Best Equity House for the Philippines in Asiamoney's annual Triple A Country Awards for 2008. This is the second time the BDO Capital to receive the Best Domestic Investment Bank award from the prestigious magazine, having bagged it also in 2006.

For the 12-month period ending Sept. 30, 2008, BDO Capital, as lead manager and lead underwriter, accounted for 62 percent of the Philippine equity capital markets fund raising—IPOs, follow-on offerings, and preferred placements. It was joint lead manager and domestic bookrunner for a few of the five IPOs during the period with a combined volume of P15.5 billion ($256.1 million)—the PAL Holdings deal, the Pepsi-Cola Products Philippines in February 2008 and the P7-billion global IPO for San Miguel Brewery in May 2008.

SRA moves to ensure feedstock supply for biofuel production

174,236 hectares of land identified

By Amy R. Remo

IN ANTICIPATION OF A SURGE IN DEMAND for biofuel feedstock, the Sugar Regulatory Administration has identified 174,236 hectares of land that could be planted to sugarcane intended for ethanol production.

The SRA said the areas identified included "green areas as new land," mainly sugarcane plantations, and existing farm areas.

Even if certain portions of the country's sugar plantations would be devoted for biofuel feedstock, the SRA assured consumers that there would be more than enough supply for consumption.

In the crop-year 2007-2008, surplus sugar reached 413,000 metric tons due to the sector's 20-year high output of 2.400 million MT. Mostly, the ending inventory for every crop year should only be 500,000 MT, or just enough for the country's two-month requirement.

Of the 174,236 hectares identified, SRA documents showed that 99,736 hectares were the so-called green areas. These areas are prime land or those situated in close proximities are more suitable for planting sugarcane.

Considered as available land, the green areas included 29,436 hectares in Bukidnon; 6,250 hectares in Zamboanga del Norte; 15,000 hectares in Zamboales; and 5,000 hectares in Masbate.

The SRA also found 7,000 hectares of green areas in Agusan; 7,000 hectares in Sultan Kudarat; 3,000 hectares in Cagayan; 7,000 hectares in Isabela; and 12,000 hectares in Misamis Occidental. More areas are available in these provinces if needed, the SRA said.

In the meantime, the SRA said 26,000 hectares of these identified were existing areas or land "presently devoted to sugar which will be converted to ethanol production."

"This presupposes sufficient distance from an existing sugar mill to justify the conversion," the agency added.

SRA data showed that 7,000 hectares of the sugar land that would be used for production of sugar to be used were in Central Negros and 19,000 hectares were in San Carlos, Binalbagan and Bago City all in Negros Occidental.

Another 31,500 hectares were identified as "existing and expansion areas for feedstock."

"Existing areas will re-channel their cane deliveries from a sugar mill to the new ethanol distillery," the SRA said. "Boiler expansion areas will be those areas adjacent to existing sugar land that will be converted to sugarcane plantation for ethanol production."

The agency said 11,000 hectares are in Bukidnon; 10,000 hectares in Tarlac; 20,000 hectares in Pampanga; 8,000 hectares in Batangas; 6,000 hectares in Cavite; and 8,500 hectares in Iloilo.

Earlier, the SRA said it was expecting investments in the biofuel sector to hit P40 billion over the next three years, despite the global credit crunch. The government expected these investments to come from 26 investors, some of which were ready to begin commercial production by 2009.

Oil exec uncertain on ethanol take-up

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER SPENDING P60 MILLION for upgrades that will allow its facilities to handle ethanol, Total (Philippines) Corp. managing director Anne Whittemore has expressed apprehension that ethanol-blended gasoline might not be that well received by consumers.

"We don't know if people will buy it, we just made a P60-million investment in our depot. The law tells us to do it (sell ethanol-blended gasoline), but the law doesn't tell you to buy it," she told reporters.

"Believe, the incentive for buying gasoline with ethanol is the price. But now that oil prices are also going down, there's no longer that incentive," she added.

The Biofuels Act of 2006 requires all firms to have no more than 5 percent ethanol blend in their gasoline within two years of the law's effectivity, or by February 2009. The mandated blend will rise to at least 10 percent after four years.

Of course, we will sell by then. The law says we have to," Whittemore said. "But bigger investments this year is indeed into ethanol. It's technically challenging to implement, but the biggest challenge is the question on whether the consumers buy it. We also have to get the full support of (the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc.) for ethanol."

In terms of supply, or with all local oil firms already offering ethanol-blended gasoline, she said Total would get its ethanol supply from abroad.

"But instead of importing ethanol itself," Total would just "buy from somebody else who's importing," she said.

As for buying ethanol locally when it becomes available commercially, she said Total would still have to find more suppliers. "We need local suppliers for it ready to tap," she explained.

Cement firms slowing down operations

THE ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN due to the global financial crisis and the expected adverse impact of the coming expansion of the tariff on cement have prompted local cement firms to retrain expansion and investment plans, and implement downsizing of their workforce.

An industry source who requested anonymity said one of the big three cement firms is planning to lay off around 300 employees, including 240 of its employees in its Mindanao operations and 30 others in its Luzon plant. The company, the same source said, is also shutting down for six months one of its plants in Luzon.

He said local cement companies were hoping to offset the loss in domestic demand and the entry competition posed by imported cement that were being brought into the country without tariff due to a basic drawback in demand and the entry competition posed by imported cement that were being brought into the country without tariff.

Cemex Philippines was also reported to have reduced its workforce by three percent last month due to the weak economic market. The firm is also shutting down kiln operations in its plants in Antipolo City and Naga, Cebu, until market conditions improve. Reports say, however, that the supply of cement will not be disrupted as both plants have sufficient inventories. Kiln operations will restart once inventories are depleted.

In a related development, the Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines said in a report that while contraction in industry indexes like cost, cement firms reported successful growth of 2009 sales in the financial crisis hit the construction industry. The situation is made worse by the adverse effects of the removal of cement import tariffs.

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Announces expansion, capex and new corporate image

Growth and success are synonymous to Phoenix Petroleum. From modest beginnings in late 2003 with a single fuel station in Davao City, Phoenix Petroleum progress to more than 80 fuel stations in Mindanao and Luzon in a short span of more than three years.

The Downstream Oil Deregulation Act of 1998 led Phoenix Petroleum to seize the market opportunity to start its quest of becoming a major player in the retail oil industry. In July 2007 Phoenix Petroleum became the first petroleum company entry to the Oil Deregulation Act to be publicly-listed in the Philippine Stock Exchange, and the first Davao-based company to cure the distinction.

Dennis A. Uy, the young and driven Phoenix Petroleum President & CEO, provided the vision, direction, strategies, and the corporate core values to ensure growth and success for the company in the future. He is passionate about the intangible values of integrity, excellence, service, innovation, teamwork and stewardship, and believes in them as necessary ingredients to realize corporate goals and objectives.

Retail Network

To accelerate the maximization of accelerated growth and market coverage, Phoenix Petroleum maintains strong partnerships with major investors, particularly companies and industry leaders. This enables Phoenix Petroleum to enjoy of supply security to meet the demands and requirements of the domestic market.

Storage Facilities

To support the aggressive retail expansion plan, Phoenix Petroleum is constructing additional storage facilities and increasing storage capacities of existing ones across the country to complement the 150,000 (600) accredited Davao bulk plant and exterior fuel tank truck operations in Lanang, Davao City. The new storage facility in New Washington, Aklan is targeted on May 2008. The Pototid 10 million-liter storage depot and terminal facility in the sprawling 1.5-hectare Batangas Union Industrial Park in Calaca, Batangas is slated to finish in January 2008. The Davao depot expansion of an additional 7.5 million liters will be completed in early 2008 as well. Phoenix Petroleum is targeting a total of 100M liter storage capacity within five years to provide the backbone of its growing retail network, and storage and terminal businesses.

Sales and Marketing

Since September 2006, Phoenix Petroleum is the exclusive logistics partner of Cebu Pacific, a market leader in the aviation industry. The company services all the jet fuel requirements of the airline in 21 of its Mindanao destinations. In September 2006, Phoenix Petroleum signed up Spex Mining as a first year supply agreement for its petroleum and fuel requirements. Spex Mining operates in Misamis, Masbate, Compostela Valley. Since launching the Mindanao retail oil market in October 2006, Phoenix Petroleum has earned a respectable market share, and continues to grow the business. A distributor selling program is in place to expand its network of distributors for its lubricants and car care products nationwide. On another front, Phoenix Petroleum actively participates in franchising shows in Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao, and Cagayan de Oro to offer entrepreneurial opportunities to prospective business partners in a fuel station franchise and lubricant and car care product distributorship.

Marian Rivera, Phoenix Model

Build Image Marketing Campaign

Marian Rivera, Phoenix Model

Like the phoenix of Aklan, Phoenix Petroleum is ready to take the next big leap, one prepared to take bigger challenges, and more ready to be the highest. Phoenix Petroleum's unyielding passion, energy is best exemplified by no less than actress Marian Rivera. As Marketing and Consumer Market specialist became a beloved household name. Now, Marian Rivera ably reflects the strength and ambition of Phoenix Petroleum. Both share a common trait of boldness, drive and passion for excellence. With the franchise of Marian Rivera and Piolo Pascual, Kamao Manok Program and Phoenix Petroleum aims for a bigger aspiration to reach out to more customers in the country and be their respective Phoenix Petroleum.

Look to the Future

Dennis A. Uy, Phoenix Petroleum President & CEO, humbly attributes the phenomenal growth of the company to the dedication and commitment of his 147 Phoenix associates, and dejectedly open doors for future successes.

He consistently extends encouragement to pursue the corporate core values with more vigor and passion for the challenges will be more daunting and the tasks more difficult as the race nears its home stretch.

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DTI seeks hub for RP goods

By Sunnex P. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE and Industry and some local manufacturers are in talks with the owners of the Coastal Mall by the Manila Bay on the establishment of a permanent trade center to promote locally manufactured and processed products.

Joyce L. Ilarmina, president of the Federation of Philippine Industries, said in an interview that the initiative would be part of a P100-million program being primarily undertaken small and medium enterprises.

"I joined a meeting during the last week of December and a lot have agreed in principle that the entire second floor of Coastal Mall would be used for the project," he was told.

"This will be a self-liquidating program on their (the DTI) account, which will pay for the use of the commercial space, would involve the development of the area into a showroom for Philippine products," he added.

Ilarmina said the program would help the DTI's drive to promote partnership of locally processed products, especially among government agencies.

He said such support to local industries may help shield the Philippines from the worst effects of the global financial crisis.

Luis Sepulveda, Trade Undersecretary Merly M. Cruz said a budget for the project was already set aside but does not have yet any plan as it is being developed.

To be exhibited also is promotion's base in Metro Manila for stores, small and medium enterprises from the provinces would provide crucial support for business activities in the region.

She said the depot was meant to be a trade center that would help promote regional products to the rest of the country and the world.

She developed to the Export Development Council authority to act as council's full time management official for promoting small and medium scale export ventures amid an expected downturn next year.

She stressed, which would be aimed to implement the Export Development Plan 2004-2010, would be set up of a P280-million Export Development Fund that the government put up in 2007.

EDC experts such a fund to be helpful in implementing an aggressive and global marketing strategy that would cover Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States.

Coastal Mall considered as venue for center

Slowdown to hit RP exports, remittances, Citigroup says

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC DOWNTURN will likely refer to lower-level overseas Filipino workers' remittances in the first quarter of next year, US banking giant Citigroup said in its global macroeconomic outlook for 2009.

"Global capital flows and demand in manufacturing will likely be more sophisticated and liquidity in the short, leading to higher intermediation costs and less investment. Global and interest rates are also likely to end the cycle higher, compounding the headwinds for investment," their Tech-based Citi economist Dan Hamza said.

In the case of the Philippines, Citi said the impact on exports and remittances from overseas Filipino workers would come from Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States.

Hamza said the effects of the global recession would further weigh emerging markets in 2009, adding that long-term growth and asset appreciation prospects in emerging markets will likely suffer even after the shock of the recession fades.

"The magnitude of the external shock is exposing unbiased weaknesses in government, corporate and banking balance sheets," he said.

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Philex yields metals worth ₱791M from Padcal

By Amy R. Remo

PHILEX MINING CORP., THE Philippines' biggest miner, said last week it produced in November P791 million worth of metals from its mining operations in Padcal, Benguet.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Philex chair and CEO Isidro Vi. Herrera reported that 746,648 dry metric tons (DMT) of copper and gold ore were delivered by the miner and treated at the firm's Benguet Benzion facilities.

This has resulted in 6,247 DMT of copper concentrates averaging 24.31 percent copper; 68.57 grams per DMT of gold and 62.40 grams per DMT of silver.

Brown said these have equivalent metal contents of 1,518 million kilograms (1,347 million lbs) copper; 920,432 grams (33,026 ounces) gold and 590,000 grams (12,539 ounces) silver.

With the productive life of to mine in Padcal, Benguet expected to end in six years' time, Philex said it was banking on the Boyongan copper-gold mine to enable it to continue mining for another 15 to 20 years.

Philex said it was confident that the Boyongan mine in Mindanao could start production by 2012.

Earlier, Philex Mining president and CEO Ernesto Tiblalima said that the company may spend as much as ₱600 million for the development of the Boyongan mine.

According to Tiblalima, the company was reviewing the Boyongan project to see if it's still feasible to follow the original mining plan.

This, he said earlier, would form part of the prefeasibility study that Philex intended to complete in as early as 10 months.

Part of the prefeasibility study included costs on what can be mined from Boyongan.

Tiblalima said Philex has sought a two-year extension from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau for the completion of its prefeasibility study

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With this phone, who needs a camera?

By Charles E. Rubio

NOW THIS IS A CASE OF A camera with a phone attached to it.

Samsung recently announced the arrival of Samsung Pixon (M8800), the world's slimmest full-touch, 8-megapixel camera-phone, according to the Korean mobile phone giant.

The Pixon is 1.16 cm thin, so slim it even beats the current title holder—the 1.18 Sirocco (SCH700)—by 0.2 mm!

Indeed, camera phones have come a long way from the fuzzy, low-megapixel models of the past (it wasn't that long ago when a 5MP camera on a phone was considered to be the best).

Imaging

Imaging is central to this VGA,000 mobile phone because, apart from its 8MP sensor, the Pixon is equipped with a lens that offers 16x digital zoom, as well as a 1.2 dual power LED flash (so the battery won't drain too quickly).

Samsung also stacked up an impressive amount of camera features and shooting gadgets.

Apart from autofocus and macro shooting functions, the Pixon is also equipped with features normally found in point-and-shoot cameras: Face Detection (recognizes human faces and then sets the focus and exposure for each); Smile Shot (snaps only if it detects a smile); Blink Detection (won't shoot if someone blinked); Shot Link (lets you tag a face with the person's name, and then, at a later date, search for item through your photos by their face and name); Auto Panorama Shot; advanced shake reduction (minimizes vibration for the best while shooting); Auto Contrast balance (provides clearer possible image even for a look-lighted subject), as well as the usual ISO, white balance and exposure adjustments and scene modes.

In addition, the Pixon allows one to employ geotagging, or adding location information to a photo using GPS.

Replace

Indeed, the Pixon has so much on-the-go controls and editing options that it could easily replace a stand-alone camera.

By the way, the camera phone is also a good video recorder as it is able to take 30 frames per second video (at 720x480 resolution), as well as 120fps slow motion video (at 320x240 resolution).

It could also play high-definition movies in DivX and WMV file formats.

Both still images and video clips can be uploaded to a variety of websites (like Flickr, Facebook, Blogger, Wordpress, and Twitter) and blogs via the included Share application.

Touchscreen

Enhancing user experience for both photo and video capture is the Pixon's 3.2-inch touchscreen, 262,000-color TFT display, which is large enough to allow the user to simply press any of the desktop-like widgets on the screen or flick such photos to the side to view the next one.

The upgraded home screen widgets could also be upgraded on-line, allowing the user to download more widgets to further personalized the phone.

Widgets are available for the music player, FM radio, image viewer, games, calendar, memo, favorite contacts, birthday reminders, calculator, Bluetooth, message inbox, message composer, profiles selector, a mirror function (using the video call camera), and various clock functions.

The Pixon is also equipped with an accelerometer that not only shifts screen images from landscape to portrait mode but also the mobile phone's texting interface from the traditional on-screen keypad layout to a full Qwerty keypad, depending on how you will position the phone on your hand.

SAMSUNG stack an impressive amount of camera features and shooting gadgets in the Pixon.

Yes, it's also a phone

Just we forgot, the Pixon is also a phone.

This quad-band mobile phone supports 3G for connecting to the Internet, as well as high-speed data downloads, including movie trailers, news and sports headlines and new music files (or up to 7.2Mbps).

The Pixon offers a built-in 136MB memory, which may be deficient as the phone offers a microSD card slot that could beef up storage capacity to up to 4 gigabytes.

While it has Bluetooth, USB, WAP and TV output connection, the Pixon has no Wi-Fi connectivity.

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Graphics for the Masses

A pretty light netbook for your wish list

By Raquel F Gomez

AT THE RATE NETBOOKS are coming out in the digital market, it's becoming hard to tell each other apart, aiding in the confusion of non-techsavvy molding low-cost ultraportable PC this Christmas.

There are about 13 brands of netbooks locally, the number divided into those produced by big OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) like Asus, Lenovo and HP, and local PC manufacturers Neo and Qube PC Technologies.

Every netbook seems to have the same features: It is either powered by Via C7 processor, Intel Celeron M processor, or Intel Atom CPU, has one gigabyte DDR2 memory, Wi-Fi and, sometimes, Bluetooth functionality.

Webcam resolution ranges from .3-**megapixel** to 1.3 MP. LCD display ranges from 6.9 inches to 10.2 inches. Battery ranges from 3 cells to 6 cells lithium ion types.

The ports are the same as well: HDA, SDH, LAN, multi-media card reader, and PC card slot. Weight is either 1 kg to 1.4 kg. Netbooks become cheaper when they only run on open operating systems like Linux, instead of Microsoft Windows.

Recently, this writer had a chance to make-nath a Lenovo IdeaPad s10, a pretty white Atom-powered device with Windows XP OS that is thinner and lighter (only 1.2 kg with battery) than the rest of other netbooks with Atom processors.

As reproduced from a globally recognized brand, the IdeaPad s10, with a 10.2-inch display, has the advantage of having proprietary features not found in others.

For example, it boasts of the OneKey Rescue System, which other Lenovo full-featured notebooks have. This is a set of applications to help the user detect and remove viruses and recover Windows system and personal data.

Other supplied software this netbook has under its sleeve includes Windows Live to surf for instant messaging, BLOG, E-mail, Web searching, photo and video share and more), Norton Internet Security (for a secure Web browsing), Adobe Reader (to read PDF files) and Energy Management software (to manage the notebook's power supply).

Lenovo, which recently has been making its consumer notebooks attractive and colorful, has devoted much thought into the design and construction of the IdeaPad s10 to make it not only pretty but stable as well.

Instead of an all-in-the screen to its lowest possible angle, the rest of the base will not wobble, let alone tip over. This design edge is present in other notebooks.

The IdeaPad s10 features a touchpad that consists of a pad and two click buttons at the bottom that acts like the left and right click buttons of a conventional mouse.

The touch pad is very responsive and has a scroll function, which is not present in touchpads of other notebooks.

Other notable design features is the keyboard, which is still comfortable to use even if it's relatively small.

Mini rubber stops are also present on the corners of the display screen to protect the display and to insure friction when closing the lid of the notebook.

Since the netbook runs on an Atom processor, it also doesn't heat up that much, as the 45-nanometer processor is developed purposely to provide low thermal output and ultra low voltage (at 2.3 watts).

This ensures longer battery life for the netbook that only features a 3-cell lithium ion battery.

Intel's focus per-

FROM LENOVO comes a pretty white Atom-powered device—the IdeaPad s10.

A NETBOOK that is simply handy in more ways than one.

former N270 features a clock speed of 1.6 GHz with 533 MHz FSB (front side bus) and 512 KB L2 cache, and supports Intel's 945GSE chipset for faster access of data and peripherals.

This fast processor that packs in 47 million transistors in a single core may be found in many newly introduced netbooks.

Storage isn't a problem with the IdeaPad s10 as it is loaded with a 160-GB hard disk drive.

The IdeaPad s10, which comes in black, white and pink finished efficiently results in PDP 2000 plus to Lenovo shops and PC retailers.

Firm weighs in prospects for RP-made LCD TV

By Mike Morales

CLAIMING TO HAVE BUILT the world's first LCD "Internet television (ITV)," a Filipino start-up company has launched a prototype of its product—a television, personal computer and recorder all rolled into one.

Despite some reception from members of the press, tech bloggers and enthusiasts, the unveiling of the sleek 32-inch Bantita ITV still hangs in the balance, what with a market reeling from a global financial meltdown.

The founder of Internet Inc., a creative and industrial design research firm, admitted that the company would still need to fully assess the impact of the financial meltdown on its sales prospects. But he is keeping his fingers crossed.

"Definitely when there's a new luxury—high-end products, the demand is safe," Jobar Quiboyen said, describing how people still tend to go in appliance stores to buy LCD TVs.

"Hopefully, values are hit the market about eight months from now, the crisis has improved," Quiboyen said.

The Bantita is essentially a television, Quiboyen said, but "it is a television with a brain of a personal computer."

Users may view pictures and video files, and listen to music files stored in the TV's hard disk. They may also browse the Internet through Bantita's multimedia content—although Internet roaming on an open-source platform.

In addition to these features, the Bantita can also record television shows—a feature similar to that of a TiVo.

The Bantita weaves together different appliances into a single device that has no external frame—the hallmark of "Filipino ingenuity," Quiboyen said.

"That is the first LCD TV that doesn't have a stand because we were able to come up with a utility design with curves on the side allowing it to stand on its own," he said at the presentation. "The curves give a rich look when it's [wall-mounted] because it floats on the wall."

Funded by a consortium of investors and big shots in the United States, Quiboyen and his aging team of industrial designers, programmers and engineers juggled with their day jobs and working on the Bantita.

"The design team, composed of Peter Cua, Jesse Fermin, Jamil Del Mundo and Mitch Rivera, worked on the frame of the Bantita, making the metal with their bare hands," Quiboyen said.

On the hardware side, Daniel Mallari, a member of the firm's inhouse-powered core engineering team, said the Bantita's pieces came together like circuits and the electronics for the TV, Quiboyen added.

Internet Inc. meanwhile tapped software firm Dig It All Solutions to do the programming of the interface.

The audience during Sunday night's launch of Bantita at Polly Cinema in Bonifacio High Street seemed to be convinced of the Bantita's performance during the demonstration, cheering say a barrage of questions ranging from tech issues to financial matters.

One audience member wanted to know about their downside on the product, fearing "companies might gobble your idea up with their financial and technological muscle."

"We need more people to continue the research, design and software teams," Quiboyen said. "We are looking for investors, especially Filipinos in Silicon Valley.

"We're looking at a time line of six to eight months, depending on how fast the money would come in. The prototypes and even the management is already in place, we just need the money."

Asked why big companies haven't made such a television, Mark Ruiz, Internet's marketing chief, explained that the hesitancy could be for the ITV "to disrupt existing business of the existing setup."

"Let's look at the ecosystem: There's the television and cable providers, on the internet side you have content providers," Ruiz said. "It's basically a complicated mesh of different components."

Ruiz hopes that he and the rest of his crew will find a "niche" by sorting out the mesh.

THE 32-INCH Bantita is a TV, PC and recorder rolled into one.

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Mobile music products set to hit the market

SONY ERICSSON HAS ANNOUNCED TWO new products in its mobile music range for high quality mobile music experience for the coming year.

Arriving by the first quarter are the W705 Walkman phone and Wireless Home Audio System MBS-900.

With Clear Bass, Clear Stereo and premium headphones, the W705 delivers sound that has crystal clear clarity and is dynamic, rich and natural.

"We're really proud of what we have achieved in 2008 with our market leading mobile music range," said Sten Pudlog of Sony Ericsson. "Combining premium design and best-in-class sound quality with super-fast access to a host of digital content, whether it be from PlayNow™ arena or via the 'Web, we really are offering the most feature-rich mobile music experience available today."

Using Wi-Fi™ to connect to SensMe™ channels, users can also use the W705 to get online for the best songs or most popular YouTube™ video clips or stream tunes wirelessly to the stylish MBS-900 speaker via Bluetooth™.

The W705 features the same superior sound quality as the W980 Walkman™ phone, which was rated "best audio experience" by a panel of experts in Germany by TEST Factory. The W705 includes popular 'Walkman™ features such as the music recognition application 'TrackID™', SensMe™, for matching your mood to the music and thinks control to change tracks with the flick of your wrist.

Also available on the W705 is PlayNow™ arena, which provides a full range of mobile entertainment...unique themes and wallpapers, ring tones, a wealth of free content and of course DRM-free music tracks and TrackID™ charts from around the world.

The W705 is much more than a music phone. Its exclusive metal finish combines with a large screen in an elegant design. Ideal for the professional feel. Use the 3.2-megapixel camera to snap photos of friends and upload them using Wi-Fi to your social networking site for all to see. Can't see a site properly? Auto rotate between vertical and horizontal mode to view the Internet to all its glory.

With the new W705 give an award-winning clear audio experience where you can listen to music as it was meant to be heard. Go online for the best songs and most popular videos on YouTube™ with the desktop direct search to online music. Connect the way you want with Wi-Fi™ and EGBA certified™ capability.

Make control lets you switch tracks and control the volume with the flick of a wrist while SensMe™ lets you create playlists based on mood rather than artists or genres. The large 2.4-inch screen lets you view websites and e-mails with high clarity. You can also multi-task from portrait to landscape with just a tilt of the phone with automatic rotation. Never get lost again with the Google Maps™ for Mobile feature. Snap and share your favourite images via Bluetooth™. Listen to the FM radio while on the move, with TrackID™ feature. The 4-GB memory card lets you store up to 3500 songs.

To complement the W705 is the Wireless Home Audio System MBS-900. The MBS-900 connects wirelessly to your mobile phone through Bluetooth™, giving crystal-clear sound through the high-quality dual speaker and subwoofer system.

The new Wireless Home Audio System MBS-900 has a unique and innovative design that makes it convenient to your home.

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THE W705 Walkman—was ahead of the pack

Sony shows might and power in exhibit

SONY'S best-selling Vaio notebooks

THESE devices, part of the "Walkman" series, are described to be "noise-canceling" music players.

By Raquel P Gomez

SEEKING A BIGGER SLICE OF THE PIE IN Japan, tech giant Sony has shown its might and power by filling up a huge exhibition area at the SM Convention Center in Pasay City with an array of products under its wing—the only exception there is the popular game console Sony Playstation.

From the small to wall displays of headphones, LCD televisions, notebooks, digicams, video cameras, home theater systems, computer screens, cell phones, and music players, the three-day Sony Expo 2008 was a confirmation of the tech giant's current and important place in the expanding digital-consumer market.

Sony Expo 2008 was also a venue for the company to showcase key "breakthrough" products that feature pioneering technologies.

The "world breakthrough notebooks, gaz" comes of the showroom contains devices that may be the answer for the rest. On display was the 3 mm thin panel XEL-1 TV, Sony's OLED (organic light-emitting diode) TV considered to be the next big thing in television technology.

The Bravia X500 is the world's first LCD TV with the "MotionFlow 240 Hz" technology, which means this TV is capable of interpolating frames three times more than the current 100 Hz implementations of LCD TVs sold in the market today.

The Vaio T is the world's first notebook to have a "noise-canceling" feature, while the Cyber-Shot T77 is the slimmest camera with an optical image stabilizer and Optical SteadyShot.

The VGC Handycam is the smallest and lightest full HD camcorder. The MWS-S750, part of the "Walkman" series, is a "noise-canceling" music player. The MDR-NC5000 headphone also has a noise-canceling feature. The recently launched x900 is a 24.5-megapixel full-frame DSLR.

"With this exhibit, we would like people to touch and feel these technologies, and have an experience of the products beyond compare," said Rodjun Ragos of Sony Philippines during the opening of the expo.

All products on display are already out in the market, and everyone can avail of "how deals" through the Sony Christmas Treasures 2008—a promo offered in appliance stores that will run until Jan. 18, 2009.

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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

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Buying a house when the world is in crisis /B3-1
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FEATURES IN RBIEF

Bullish on Caraga

THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED 14th Caraga Business Conference in Surigao City was a success despite the absence of Island Gov. Rolan Ulan Barbers and Mayor Alfonso S. Cusumo.

During the conference, Invest Mindanao Hop, Caraga IMP regional director, discussed issues with the members of the Surigao Chamber of Commerce and Industry, recipient of PCCI 2008 Most Outstanding Chamber in Mindanao award.

Yap said that while the SIR remains to be the most managed agency in government, it still continues to diligently collect taxes for the national coffers.

e-Services 2009 Awards on

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry, through the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), is now accepting entries for the e-Services 2009 Awards, an award that acknowledges the competitiveness of Philippine-based companies and the talents of Filipino professionals who excel in the field of Information Technology (IT).

The e-Services will be held in conjunction with the 4th e-Services Global Sourcing Conference and Exhibition on Feb. 9 to 10, 2009, at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

McKinley Hill generates 5T jobs

THE NEWLY established McKinley Hill Cyberpark in Fort Bonifacio is now also fast becoming a top employment generating special IT zone in the country.

By the end of the year, top business process outsourcing (BPO) office buildings developers Megaworld Corp. is projecting the number of onboarding and outsourcing (O&O) employees and executives at McKinley Hill Cyberpark to exceed 5,000 individuals.

Megaworld is the developer of both the Eastwood City Cyberpark in Libis, Quezon City, the first and most successful special IT park in the country, and McKinley Hill Cyberpark.

"By developing the Eastwood City Cyberpark, Megaworld provided the necessary infrastructure support to nurture the growth of the domestic BPO industry. Now, with McKinley Hill Cyberpark, we are giving O&O firms the assurance that they will continue to have a prime location that will cater to their needs as they pursue their expansion programs," Megaworld EVP for business development Jeanette Go said.

Now Sun Shop opens

SUN CELLULAR'S retail arm, The Sun Shop recently opened at the City Square Shoppes in Cabadbaran, Agusan del Norte. Offering Sun Cellular's prepaid services and handset accessories by being a reseller.

Chikka now in Italy

MANILA-BASED Chikka.com, creator of the popular text-to-text gateway to texting mobile phones, announced its commercially launch in Italy through Pinoy mobile networks in Italy, expanding its campaign to mobile users in Three countries. Mobile operators in the UK and Spain earlier opened their networks to Chikka allowing Chikka's online community to send free text messages to mobile subscribers in those countries.

Just like mobile subscribers in the UK and Spain, Smart Pinoy Italy users are able to sign-in to Chikka using their mobile numbers to enjoy Chikka's patented mobile instant messaging system "on the go" via SMS.

"With our recent connectivity to Smart Pinoy Italy, Chikka extends the full benefits of mobile instant messaging to the community there. This means they can go offline, away from their computers and still continue Chikka texting," said Chikka Bandumanis. Chikka cited another effort

Subic, Clark firms find ways to cope with crisis

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

(last of two parts)

CLARK FREEPORT — THE SCRAPPING of the only tax that the Philippine government has imposed on businesses at the Clark and Subic free ports may allow firms to cope with the impact of the global financial crisis, says Percy Aguilar, manager of the garments firm Hermoda Fashion International Corp. here.

The tax runs to only 5 percent of the gross income earned by firms. Most locators in the Clark and Subic free ports enjoy duty-free importation of capital goods and raw materials.

The Clark Development Corp. and the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, both state firms that are managing the free ports developed from former American military bases, impose their respective unilaterally.

They would have to ask Congress to amend the base conversion laws (Republic Act No. 7227 for Subic and RA 9400 for Clark) to get that single tax burden out, officials say.

Benigno Aquino, CDC president, says 2 percents of the 5 percent tax goes to local governments around Clark and Subic.

"There's utility in where it goes," he says.

But Hikmatyar Seji, president of the Hikmatyar Seji Philippines in Clark, and Rudhadat Chowdary, vice president for operations of the I-1 aerospace in Subic, both disagree with the proposal to remove the tax.

"We are sensing here [in] private money and pay for [state-owned] Filipino [workers] would be happy. This is company-responsibility, especially for us," Seji says.

Chowdary says: "Businessmen would always like incentives, but for distributors of aircrafts, money should go to ... people who are suffering right now."

Reductions in base rental and import-export documentation charges, as well as cheaper and efficient power and water supplies may also help, says Aguilar.

He says these incentives could enhance the competitiveness of companies in Clark and Subic.

SIMA Administrator Jesse Arema says there are the kinds of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, all that investors sought was a reduction in base rental.

Mark Prensley, general manager of the Smart Hotels in Clark, says the government could help if it would work to declare a "Clark" or qualified industrial zone, within Clark.

"This could become a hub for garments manufacturing, and I know that [Philippine authorities] are going to invest some money into lobbying for this with the US government, and they've been sending people over to the US right now and that, for Clark, would be a fantastic boost because, currently, we pay 23 percent duty-free the United States," Prensley says.

"If we have the Quiz in Clark, our one-thing all the best garments makers here, and they will pay duty-free into the US which will be a huge bonus because China, Vietnam and other countries want to get that. That would be a big bonus for Philippine manufacturers if we could get that," he says.

"A little bit of work with some of the new incentives or extending existing incentives would really be a big benefit," he adds.

In the end, the efficiency in production and delivery, as well as product quality, will provide the big competitive edge in difficult times, officials of Clark and Subic firms say.

The labor front is quiet, at least during the management's aim of saving jobs, says Aguilar, who is also president of the 15 garment manufacturing managers in Clark.

Aguilar's group, which employed a combined 148,314 workers—more than double the Filipino work force hired by the US military until it closed Clark in 1991 and Subic in 1992.

The crisis stands to defeat the very purpose of the conversion of the American bases, which is to help Central Luzon residents get back on their feet after the closure of the military facilities and on the heels of Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruptions.

Seji and Jeff Lin, president of the Subic Bay Development and Management Corp., are hopeful that foreign companies would weather it out, having survived the 1997 financial crisis.

"If we are competitive, we can survive," says Tomohiro Washio, Hitachians vice president and treasurer.

Arema expects the impact of the crisis in its loss for Subic because its investment base came to diversified from low-cost manufacturing in the first 10 years of the free port to heavy industries in recent years.

More capital goods, then consumer items such as garments, are being produced in Subic now, he says.

Subic, he says, will not compare solely on the basis of low-cost industries.

"It is very difficult for the Philippines to be successful in that because our objective is to improve the living conditions of

(CONCLUDED)

EXPRESSWAY: The Subic Bay Freeport is among the top investment havens in Central Luzon.

Do organizations have a personality?

By Joseph C. Sanchez and Gina M. Hechanova

WORKPLACE WISDOM

IN TODAY'S WAR FOR TALENT, organizations are pressed to provide job applicants a good reason why they should join their company. While many compete in terms of rewards or opportunities, others recognize that image or reputation matters.

The term "employer branding" implies that companies seek to market themselves to job applicants, just as a company markets its products to consumers. A fundamental principle in marketing is "know what consumers want." In the case of employer branding, the question that many organizations ask is what do job seekers want?

Organization personalities

We asked college seniors to identify the traits of organizations they would like to work for. We also sought to examine which organizations were more attractive to job seekers as well as whether certain traits of personalities were attracted to particular types of organizations.

The results of the study identified seven organizational personalities, namely formal, fun, former 100, socially responsible, prestigious, dynamic and culture-oriented.

The most attractive organization was the formal organizational personality. Those comprising this personality are organized, persevering, reliable, professional and disciplined. Second in attractiveness is the fun organizational personality. Organizations are described as friendly, fun-loving, fresh, generous and cool.

Third in attractiveness is the values-oriented organizations. This was described as team child-oriented, caring and humble. Fourth on the list is the dynamic organization. These are organizations that are perceived as "in" driven, on-the-go, international and dominant. The former 100 organizational personality described as powerful, popular and rich was ranked fifth in attractiveness.

Sixth on the list was the sophisticated organizational personality. These organizations are described as stylish and swanky. Finally, lowest on the list is the young organizational personality of those that can be described as hip, happy and fashionable.

Person-organization fit

Interestingly, there appears to be a relationship between individual personalities and those of organizations. For example, we found that job hunters high in agreeableness are attracted to value-oriented organizations. Individuals high in conscientiousness were attracted to formal organizations. Individuals who are extroverts are attracted to fun and dynamic organizations.

The results show that job seekers do have perceptions of organization personalities and some of these are more attractive than others. What are the implications of these on employers? On one hand, organizations have to be deliberate in the way they present themselves to applicants. Recruitment strategies, materials and other company information should reflect the personality values and personality. In addition, companies should be aware that importance of selecting the right recruiters who will represent their organization to others.

Selection processes may also need to be revised and aligned to ensure that job seekers are receiving a unified message about the organization. Line managers, for example, need to be properly oriented to ensure that they are given how to convey the organization to job seekers.

However, the flip side to this is that employers may wish to find out how exactly they are being perceived by job seekers. Because certain people are attracted to particular organizations personalities, it is important for employers to understand what their reputation or image is to job seekers.

Companies may also want to examine who are the kind of people apply to their organization, and whether there are the kinds of talent they wish to attract especially to meet future demands.

In the end, employer branding is not just about protecting an image and coming up with catchy recruitment ads. It requires knowledge of a company's reputation and the alignment of its efforts toward getting the kind of talent it needs.

Dr. Sanchez has an MA in industrial/organizational psychology from the Ateneo de Manila University. Dr. Hechanova is executive director of Ateneo Center for Organizational Research and Development (Ateneo CORD). For feedback, please e-mail us: newsroom@inquirer.com.ph.

Gov't urges inventors, artists to secure patents

By Reuvel W. Domingo

THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE has urged Filipino inventors and other owners of intellectual property to secure patents and copyrights in line with the agency's campaign for better management of intangible assets.

The campaign is being stepped up amid expectations that intellectual property, which is estimated to represent 5.8 percent of all domestic wealth, will take a greater role in the development of the Philippine economy in tune with global trends.

Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., IP Philippines director general, said that while the processing and approval of applications for patents took five years, the filing itself was the best protection for the inventors' works.

The global benchmark in processing patent application is four years, he said during a stakeholders' forum called "IPR Matters to the Philippine Economy." The forum—which was attended by intellectual property rights holders, inventors and other interested parties—was held in cooperation with the IP Coalition, which groups associations of musicians, composers, video distributors, software developers and chambers of commerce.

Cristobal said intangible assets represented a significant part of the world's wealth, but that this was not yet maximized in the Philippines.

"A brand like Coke has been appraised at $50 billion," he explained. "That means Coca-Cola Co. can borrow money based on that value."

Cristobal cited as another example the Walt Disney group, which was able to borrow $400 million against its trademarks and another $400 million based on the copyrights it holds.

"If we in the Philippines are not going to be left behind again in this global economy, we must learn to manage both our existing and future intellectual property," he said.

"IP rights is already pervasive in our economy," he added. "Sectors that actually drive on the whole electronics—our biggest export sector—knowledge process outsourcing, clothing, furniture, and automotive and computer graphics."

Earlier, IP Philippines and the Philippine Judicial Academy held a two-day second advanced course on IP law for commercial court judges amid efforts to have the country removed from the United States' list of bootlegging haven.

The seminar—a follow-up to the course on trademarks, patents, and copyrights held in 2006—focused on more specific and complicated legal issues to enhance the judges' judicial skills required in resolving intellectual property law litigation.

Data from IP Philippines show that 87 stakeholders had filed about 2,000 IP cases since the agency became the lead coordinator of the country's IP system in 2005.

As of September 2008, SC records show a total of 536 cases on IP rights violations pending in local courts.

Subic, Clark firms . . .

From page B2-1

workers. When you seek [low-cost labor], you reduce wages and benefits ... We want jobs that are value-added because our workers are highly trained," he says.

He worry for projects that are focused on international tourism. When air fares increase, the schools will be affected, and those projects will be hit. He don't see any major impact for other industrial projects that have been approved or have secured their financing.

"If ever, some in the pipeline may be delayed because of credit tightening," says Arroza, citing the difficulty of raising equity now that the market is down.

Projects by investors from the Middle East appear to be on track, and some are in the [unclear] to-seat for business process outsourcing sites, he says.

SBMA's placement program for displaced workers is in place, helping already those staying down or closing shop like courier giant FedEx.

The crisis can create a deep impact if it drags on for a year or two, Arroza says.

The SBMA and the CDC are not rushing to prepare an emergency plan. Its SBMA's case, it is focused on enhancing the competitiveness of the zone.

"It's a good opportunity for us to focus on internal improvement," says Arroza.

Among these are the upgrade of ports and roads and reducing red tape.

The quality of the work force is a big factor that encourages investors to locate their businesses in the Philippines.

"When it comes back—and it will come back—we will be in a better position to take advantage of it," Arroza says.

Bautista, a former member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation advisory council, says: "When the big guys get sick, we cannot help but get sick also."

But preparations have been put in place, he adds.

"We also anticipated this, and when we began in August, we instituted a plan...the also sales service operations. We look at operations and revenues, and analyze who our locators are," Bautista says.

"They will, of course, be affected because [the financial crisis] is global and their products are mostly destined to developed countries [or those most prone to the meltdown]."

The CDC's after sales service has reviewed the lease contracts of firms and is helping those hard up through quality and efficiency upgrades.

On ending, Bautista says: "I am positive, 100 percent sure, this is being addressed. The big boys are there, and not only the US but Europe is in the same boat. I'm certain they would not let this go like this. They would have to do something drastic that would encode to our benefit also."

ON THIS SITE HAS RISEN

Meralco Amadeo Delivery Point Substation

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It is the site of Meralco's newest 230kV substation, a P1.000 billion major delivery point of power directly from the power plants to transmission lines, on to the Amadeo delivery point substation that will serve the whole province.

Located along C.M. de los Reyes Avenue, Bgy. Banaybanay, Amadeo, Cavite, the Meralco-delivery point substation was slated for construction and commissioning in 2012. But due to fast growing economic activities in the province, it was begun much earlier in September 2007, and will be inaugurated December 2008.

With its initial capacity of 300 MVA for improved power quality and reliability of the 115kV subtransmission system in the province of Cavite, it will benefit Amadeo, Silang, Tagaytay, Indang, Alfonso, Mendez, Dasmariñas, Trece Martires, Tanza, Rosario, Gen Mariano Alvarez, Gen Trias, Aguinaldo, Malagasdas, Carmona and Imus.

The project includes:
- 300 MVA, 230kV-115kV power transformer
- Eight 230kV circuit breakers
- Three 115kV circuit breakers with protective equipment
- 25.3 kilometers of 115 kV subtransmission lines serving as outlets going to the existing Gateway substation and the Tagaytay substation; and
- Conjunctive works at Dasmariñas and FCIE substations for the additional protection system and at Silang substation to complete the 115 kV out-in scheme for Dasmariñas-Silang and Silang-Tagaytay-Amadeo-115kV lines.

It aims to lower technical system loss of the subtransmission system, avert brownouts by providing an alternate power source in the province in case of outages from the TransCo Dasmariñas substation and provide bulk power capacity.

Core customers to benefit from this project include: Intel Technology Phils., Euro Med Lab Phils., Holland Pacific Paper, Phil. Dairy Products, San Miguel Corp., Universal Robina Corp., Dasmariñas Paper Mills, Consolidated Industrial Gases, and Cypress Manufacturing Ltd. Emerging to benefit are Gateway Business Park, People's Technology Complex and Fine Cavite Industrial Park. Likewise, homes, communities, businesses will be served.

This is part of Meralco's commitment and corporate direction to continually serve our customers with the best facilities and anticipate their needs. Engineers and technical personnel have been working continually to complete the substation before yearend.

The challenges of the changing times notwithstanding, the years 2008 to 2011 are committed to investing in the electric infrastructure to serve current and forecasted customer needs.

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AN EYE ON THE ACTION

It was a night of heavies. Dons and their ladies at the Members Only Club at the Fort Global City. Once you stepped through its imposing doors, you may have as well stepped back through time into the years of Prohibition, when gangsters ruled and played.

Men in fedora hats, scarlet-clad models, slung in sugar-pink feather boas; all of them moved through the mist and smoke to jazz and a touch of the illicit filled the air. But wait and look again, these men and women were also the top business owners in the country and members of SME Nation present for the much-awaited Watcher launch.

People of course laughed at the irony from the start. How can real gangsters and crooks ever hope to get away, now that Watcher is ready and online? Beautiful girls reminded everyone as they walked through crowds, cooing "You are being watched." In their arms they carried laptops displaying multiple camera views of Members Only's five floor area.

As the evening's entertainment rolled on, two lovely singers warmed up the crowd for the evening's climax: a mesmerizing dance number by no less than world ballroom champion Edtah Ledesma and partner. For this evening she choreographed a routine that embodied the best of 20's ragtime flair.

What everyone was talking about of course, was the revolution in business monitoring and surveillance that PLDT Watcher will give to business owners all over the country. The solution uses a combination of IP camera, motion sensors, special software and the strongest PLDT network to give owners real-time visual monitoring capability over a PC, laptop or even their 3G mobile phones. Business owners were amazed at the convenience and ease of use that the solution promises to deliver.

The freebies with Watcher laptops continued to move through the crowd and the drinks flowed as the special raffle awarded free one-year Watcher subscriptions, and an Asus notebook with a free WeRoam subscription. Not much later the evening indeed turned several shades more festive and wild. Many were caressing and on the verge of naughtily misbehaving, but how could they really? Somebody was undoubtedly watching.

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PERSONAL FINANCE

Buying a house when the world is in crisis

By Ma. Salve Duplito
Inquirer

JUST SIX MINUTES TO THE ENTICE DEVELOPMENT last October to visit her son and was just in time to watch the economy swoon and homes-change signs from "For Sale" to "On Sale." Once the economic tension was gripping households across America, she ended up doing her home-buying spree very quickly.

Jody is not the only one snapping up bargains. In the news are cash-rich Chinese at on taking advantage of the drop in home prices in the United States. Locally those who have the cash either for outright purchase or down payment, have good credit standing, are employed in stable companies and are generally financially healthy

FRANCISCO Ma. D. Reese, head of repression and marketing, ex Ayala Land International Sales

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New business models for more profitable hospital operations

(Second of two parts)

IT HAS BEEN SAID TIME AND again that when we cannot measure we cannot improve. Measurements quantify results and give us the ability to compare these results against pre-determined standards or benchmarks. This implies objectivity and cannot merely be dependent on personal judgment or opinions. The purpose is to provide feedback on performance so that hospital stakeholders will know exactly where they stand. Measurements also clearly show where inefficiencies exist, where improvements can be made and where opportunities for better results may be open.

Financial figures, if accurate and timely, will enable the hospital to take aggressive or corrective action in order to protect or improve profits. The importance of the financial and statistical reports, and the analytical exercise that goes with them, are points most in providing or ensuring investments and resources that can lead to either gains or losses.

Management can demand that the data analysts review the results at the end of the month down to the patient level, but the potential and power of the information comes at a price. Whether the price paid is justified by the information generated is a decision management has to make based on its needs and its benefits.

Cost savings, better customer service, simplified processing, less spending, easy data access and even tailored medical records can be the result of intelligent automation, which can certainly contribute to improved profitability.

It is wise for hospitals to look at their plans beyond the current technologies and applications. With the fast pace at which new technologies are developed, not only for bookkeeping or support services but also in anticipation of more information-based medicine, it is prudent for hospitals to prepare their IT roadmap and plan the future. Decisions to prepare for the increasing use of technologies in the future.

This will allow hospitals to develop and phase in its long-term acquisition of new technologies while re-training its administrative. Logic and reason will always weigh over system benefits but making the right decision not only will enable innovation to be adopted more easily but also give the hospital first to market advantage.

Competing in values

The consequences of a bad economy on hospital operations are predictable: patient census will likely drop, patients and insurers will be more value conscious, there will be poorer absorption of fixed cost, profit margins will be slower, account collection period will lengthen.

These will create weaker liquidity, smaller capex budgets and perhaps even scaled down operations. Hospitals with sound balance sheets may fare better than those with weak financials, but all must adjust to the reality of the bad economic times.

The writers of the directions, principles and financial results of hospitals is a task the CEO and the management team normally do on a continuing basis, whether the economy is good or bad. It is possible that some hospitals may be forced to restructure themselves and must re-focus on their more profitable services lines, where they excel in expertise and where their true passion exists.

They could also de-emphasize those that are in negative territory. It is but logical that investments are directed to clinical services that make economic sense.

This is not to say that profitability is the only measure in deciding what capabilities to build up. But the good results of this approach are reasons why we have seen the proliferation of standalone clinics specializing in one or a few clinical service lines. Examples of these are dialysis, stroke, orthopedic surgery, mini-surgi centers and the like.

Many hospitals, even full-service hospitals, are choosing to set up select centers of excellence instead of pursuing investments in a broad spectrum of service lines. Market forces encompassing the move to this direction as a way to ensure more competitiveness versus its more focused competitors who naturally have achieved, because of their concentrated effo rts, economies of skill and scale.

The successful range of clinical services in a business model that has proven profitable is in progression. By limiting its service offering and by promoting itself as a differentiated facility, covering only on very specific practice schools more patients to the facility, easily achieving critical mass.

Naturally, this big practice success phenomenon believes that this clinical option precludes them with their expenses in charges their skills in their field of expertise. If managed well and its clinical outcomes remain positive, the business model will continue to produce profits for its stakeholders.

Leveraging for profits

We are aware that equity is the most expensive source of capital and leveraging or "using other people's money" increases the ROE of investors, borrowing it often reserved to when owner's equity limits the capability of the institutions to take advantage of market opportunities.

Borrowing funds would be a good financial strategy provided this is done with prudence and used to finance projects that will yield sufficient returns to cover debt service and add to the owners' rate of return.

Other than leveraging, there are other financial tools available to maximize the employment of scarce capital especially to non-core activities that can be better outsourced to outfits that specialize in offering these services.

Hospitals should consider outsourcing the following functions to independent BPOs who can perform them reliably and more cost effectively. Among these non-core functions, others than the usual janitorial, security and janitorial services, are payroll and benefits processing, accounts receivable collection, processing of PhilHealth, insurance and personnel claims and reimbursements. Extending and detailing can likewise be given to food service, slip outfits. Managing and maintaining of IT facilities can also be outsourced by experienced in setting up long-experienced in-house IT personnel.

New business models for E-learning equipment acquisition through joint ventures with doctors and investors will enable hospitals to embark on expansion or upgrading moves that can speed up the hospital's road to profitability.

Certainly, some benefits from outsourcing are obvious: working capital is reduced when cash is not tied up in fixed assets, capital is freed for more productive uses, valuable space will be made available for revenue generating services, cutost growth and morale are boosted by current people engaged in the functions outsourced when non-core manpower are shifted to another organization.

Patient-centric culture

Kotler, I emphasized that all institutions, whether organized for profit or not, must learn to generate funding for survival, vitality and accomplishment of mandated tasks. Profit, by whatever name we wish to call it, is always good for the institution.

Hospitals are humanitarian institutions established to serve the public good. Capitalists who invest their money in hospitals do not really expect to make bundles of money from this investment. I believe they do so because they know they have social responsibility current needs in their food and country.

Notwithstanding motivations, hospital management is responsible for insuring that the hospital operates profitably so that it can meet its obligations to the patient. The patient is the owner of its existence and his well-being and health are its manufactured duty.

There is a reason why the services rendered by hospitals are collectively called "HEALTH-CARE. Hospitals must therefore cultivate, control and "flourish" its patient-centric culture. This is achieved by rendering compassionate care that puts the well-ness of the patient as the primary consideration.

I think that if we do right by our patients, we retain their loyalty and they encourage and their family and relatives to better business.

I will end this by going back to the experiences shared by Dr. Sherry and his aspirations to make health more economically accessible through quality service and ways of moving his vision forward and what is remarkable is that those programs are by themselves unremarkable.

His success does not come from any spectacular breakthrough—only by a series of small, doable things that were done extremely well, with passion, dedication and a sense of mission.

I believe there are many Dr. Sherrys in the health industry who have the economic and legal rights in healthcare's reality.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is Jesus Estanislao, a management consultant. Feedback at mapp@philnews.com.ph. For previous articles, please visit mapp.org.ph)

'The demand for homes is there—recession or not'

Buying a house when the world is in crisis

Pinoy ingles, B4 >

1. Carefully consider location. Your home's value is greatly affected by where it is built. Protect the money that you plunk in by researching on projects about the area around it, the ease of transportation and nearby developments. Is the government planning to build a highway nearby or will there be a mall development soon? Think it your business to know whether these are negative recommendations nearby or ones that will add to the value of your home. Find out how much it costs to drive and commute to work or school every day, including toll fees.

2. Buy directly from the developer at the source. If possible, be a direct buyer so you can ask for a bigger discount. However, be prepared to make sure of documentary requirements and the process at checking the authenticity of the title, tax payments, among others. The process of buying a home can be quite complicated, but, as always, convenience comes at a high cost.

3. Double-check a developer's track record. During the 1997 crisis, a lot of people were burned when developers who were hit by the double whammy of the sudden peso depreciation and huge dollar-denominated debt. Many homebuyers ended up holding titles to properties worth nothing especially since most were sold on a pre-construction basis or were still under construction.

"It is easy to make spectacular lies but hard just in keeping that consistent. The only proof that you have is the track record of that company," says Francisco Mc D. Sarian, head of operations and marketing at Ayala Land International Sales.

Indeed, in the real estate, there is a possibility that could happen again. "It can happen again. Let's just wait and see," he says.

Sarian says the track record will prove if the developer can deliver on the advertised quality of the property at the date promised. A project that is overpriced, poorly built or delivered late will certainly take a certain portion of the loot so that the community doesn't look cramped and not allowing new set stores to be built in every corner. Quality of infrastructure like sewerage and water systems should also be major considerations when buying a home.

These fall under good property management, and both Sarian and Rafael say that when a developer pulls out all the stops to provide good service long after the last property in a community has been sold, the property appreciates or much faster.

Case in point is the Greenbury Estates within Ayala Land's Nuvali development south of Manila sold the P9,000 per square during the early part of construction, but the last property sold this year for P20,000 per square meter. Ayala Heights in Quezon City is valued three steps at P14,000 per square meter while the nearby subdivisions are sold at P9,000 to P9,500 per square meter.

"You might pay a premium for all these, but over the long term it will be worth it," says Rafael. He says the company has even corrected structural flaws discovered by its

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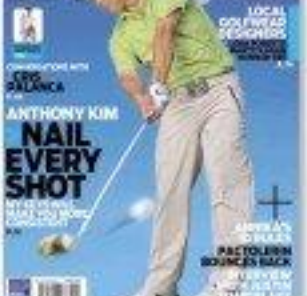

Golf Digest Philippines December 2008 – January 2009 is packed with tips, techniques and notable personalities. Take hot star Anthony Kim, who teaches tricks to nail your drives. Mic Que shows you how to send that ball far into the fairways. And Cris Palanca talks about his goal to go pro with his gym workouts and course routine. Find out how celebrity Justin Timberlake got hooked on golf. And see how an ex-champ climbed his way back to the top. Plus, spot local designers Marty Hagan, Lora Roberto and Hannah See turn their passion for the sport into stylish pieces. All these and more found in the latest issue of Golf Digest Philippines out in newsstands for only P150!

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Succeeding with a pound of will and passion in equal parts

From page B1-1

In need to earn.

"I learned a lot from my dad," Rita said. "He's my mentor. I am who I am because of him. He supported me a lot. I also got in the back could make the world of a difference."

Before she put up EuroSkills, Rita worked as a teacher in a preschool in 1996 in the village where she lived. She was 19 at the time. She enjoyed with her teaching job for a year before she put up her own preschool, the "Sea of Knowledge." The school was operational from 1998 to 2002.

It was when she "went corporate" in 2002, however, that she really racked up the experience needed to later put up EuroSkills.

First she joined Smart One Communications, a call center company, as an interactive assistant to the CEO. She stayed with Smart for for almost two years. She then moved to another call center company, eTelebusiness, as a division and innovations administrator. Not long after, she was promoted training manager. After a year and half, she left the company.

In 2004, she joined Intel as a training manager and business development manager. While working full time for Intel, where she trained and interviewed over 1,000 call center agents, Rita used the time to work something up—a business venture of her own.

She wanted to be her own boss. The result was EuroSkills.

"What's funny was, seeing an old diary of mine I haven't seen in years," Rita said. "We have some of my goals."

One of those—you guessed it—was to "create my own training company." And's even in "train the Filipino people."

It was like dreaming EuroSkills into existence then, Rita's young executive said.

Starting Rita worked on the idea of EuroSkills. She continued to have a hands-on approach in running the company overseeing the administrative and financial aspects of the business.

Actually, she has more things to attend to now that EuroSkills has branched out to Makati, Alabang and Bacolod City. Though the Cebu branch remains the main office, 40 percent of the company's business is in Makati mainly because there are more call center companies there.

The training, which last nine hours a day for two weeks, are done in cooperation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. The participants allowed for free training of applicants, as the government agency reportedly shoulders their tuition under a scholarship program.

This year alone, the company has trained close to 2,000 individuals under Tesda's scholarship program. Tesda gives the most number of scholarship vouchers to EuroSkills than other call center training companies.

Of course, EuroSkills couldn't leverage for other private companies, too. In those cases, training costs are shouldered by the companies.

According to Rita, equal numbers of male and female applicants get to train under them. The applicants are usually unemployed individuals, aged 18 to 26.

Now married with a 2-year-old daughter, Rita remains focused on expanding the company and the people who work for it.

"It's all about the people," she said. "Have the right attitude and do honest business and the right people will fall in your lap."

While EuroSkills still focuses on training and recruitment, Rita said the search to give more attention to local learning outside the country, most probably to Singapore and Malaysia.

In five year's time, she hopes EuroSkills will have matured enough to franchise in its own. Then, she'll have more time thinking of other ways to improve the lives of the Filipino people, she said.

Rita's advice

- Believe in a vision of success. Don't settle behind your boss' shadow.
- Think positive. The mind is powerful. Put to mind that you can do it, and you will.
- Don't be afraid if you don't know everything at first. Your passion to learn will carry you through, along with an effective support system.
- Resist possible opportunities and grab them.
- Be sure has to always follow other people's advice. Believe in your self.
- Love what you do. Moreover, enjoy seeing people around you grow and succeed.
- Listen to other people's ideas, take the good ones and learn from them.
- Write down on paper your goals and aspirations.
- Focus is key to achieving anything.

"Think positive. Put to mind that you can do it, and you will"

Buying a house when the world is in crisis

From page B1-1

buyer even after the acceptance form has been signed. "If there are any we will still convert it," he says. "It's important to buy quickly," Rosas adds.

5. Set aside money for remodeling, new furniture and home maintenance.

The deals on your savings shouldn't end when you pay down payment and set aside the budget for monthly mortgage payments. Be prepared and create a budget for new furnishings and maintenance, especially if you are not buying a new home. If you plan to keep the expenses at a minimum, take your door to enhance your current home or on your current unit for expenses. Living in a house without living room or that doesn't reach is less important than keeping your emergency fund at a healthy level.

Many things compete for our attention when it comes to making hard-earned cash grow—fi nchess business, stock market investments, retirements, money whores. Real estate, while hard to liquidate is a investment's notice, is safer because it "never loses it's value," say Rosas and Rafael.

"Even blue-chip stocks can be stripped of all their value. Look at Bear Stearns. But land or a house doesn't. If its price drops, and so for that hasn't happened here, you and your children can still live in it," Rafael says.

(For more personal finance articles, visit Inquirer.net's [illegible] at http://blogs.inquirer.net/moneysmarts.)

RITA Trillo-Ugarte

BUSINESS *Monday*

Succeeding with a pound of will and passion in equal parts

LIGAYA family

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AVAIL OF BRIDGESTONE'S TIRES & TUNES PROMO NOW!

Make your driving experience even more enjoyable by getting an Apple iPod Shuffle (1 GB) absolutely FREE for every purchase of four (4) pieces of Bridgestone passenger car tires (Turanza GR80, Turanza ER60, Turanza AR10, MY01 and all Potenza line of tires rim 15" and above).

From August 15 to December 31, 2008 at all participating Bridgestone dealers nationwide.

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

HE'S THE MAN

When it comes to EnvoDrive's overall direction, strategic management and business strategies, Rita Trillo-Ugarte is the man, or rather, the woman who calls the shots.

EnvoAsia Training and Development is a company that Rita started in 2005. It provides industry-leading human resources solutions to more than 30 multinational companies in the country.

In just three years, Rita had led EnvoAsia from a startup company with no revenue, to one that has expanded to four cities across the nation with 80 employees, half of whom are trainers. The company has since experienced a 10X percent growth.

"I had all the doubts in the world which we were just about to open our first site [in Cebu]," Rita told the business in an exclusive interview. "But I was going by on my first day when we did open."

End-to-end solutions

Ugarte invested a total of P3 million to put up the company which focuses on providing end-to-end HR solutions—from sourcing and recruitment, executive search, training and development, and HR and business consultancy.

Basically, they train people—many of whom aspire to become call center agents—to do the jobs for which they are applying.

In just four months, the company fully recovered her investments—proof of how solid the business is despite hard times.

Rita decided to put up the first branch in Cebu, the company's head office, because of the growing labor demand of the call center industry. Rita believes in the Filipinos' ability to excel in the call center industry with the help of effective training.

"I am determined to help the call center industry grow bigger and better in the country by providing it with excellent human resources," the 36-year-old executive said.

Her entrepreneurial spirit, she said, started kicking into high gear when she was just a child, not more than 10 years old, at home. She once ushered buying chocolates in the store and reselling it to her sisters with a marked up price.

Extra money

The fifth of six children, Rita migrated to Los Angeles in the United States with her family before she was five. She was 14 when the family came back to the country for good.

Rita said she would make extra money by babysitting or by going door-to-door, selling all sorts of cards (phone cards, greeting cards). She would also wake up early to go with her dad and help out in the restaurant

NEWSBREAK, A2-3

PLDT offers Wi-Fi bundle

FOR A BUSIEST TIME thieves on technology, a Wi-Fi logo strategically on credit-takers's hopeful or three days to a meal.

PLDT/SMRT, Bolton now offers wired and wireless-wide connections yet another competitive edge through its Wi-Fi service bundle.

The Wi-Fi bundle is part of PLDT/SMRT Mother's range of products and services for a wide variety of business needs.

With the Wi-Fi bundle, the subscribers of PLDT DSL/Bolt, subscribers may serve as Wi-Fi hotspots, providing high-speed Internet access to customers carrying Wi-Fi ready devices such as laptops.

For example, many coffee shops and fast food restaurants now offer web-access as it helps create an environment, encouraging clients to stay.

The Wi-Fi service can also serve as an added revenue stream for SMEs.

They can create their preferred Wi-Fi access pricing policies and promotions, while getting the full proceeds—no need to share revenues with Wi-Fi providers.

BUSINESS Monday

Organic products to the rescue

By Jun N. Reyes

FOR YEARS, THE COMPETITIVE EDGE product has looked kindly on the Philippines' fresh and processed agricultural exports like mangoes, coconut products, pineapples and sweet corn.

Now, according to the Department of Tourism, the Philippines may yet come to the other niche in the agricultural export market taking its organic fruits and vegetables.

This is due to the growing demand in Japan, the country's second largest trading partner, for organic food.

"The increasing popularity of the healthy lifestyle in Japan will definitely attract the specialized market segment of vegetable and fruit investors (to) express (sic) to the Philippines," Tourism Secretary Ace Durano said.

He explained that as the Japanese move toward even more healthy eating options, they also continue to look for high quality agricultural producers.

And they do not want to just eat the produce; they want to go to farms to see how the food is grown. Once opening up the possibility of the country becoming an agri-tourist site.

Japanese tourists are now reportedly eyeing the Philippines, one of the largest agricultural producers in Southeast Asia, for its potential in agri-tourism.

ORGANIC B4 |

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_inq@inquirer.com.ph
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Edna Arles Espinosa

Hassle-free holidays with MegaLink

JOLLIBEE FOUNDATION DELVES INTO LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

NOT EVERYTHING WILL BE ON hold this Christmas season with the shortened eight-day long holiday from Dec. 25, 2006 to Jan. 1, 2007. For most banks, the last banking day for 2006 will be Dec. 24 with a few banks opening on Dec. 26. The next banking day will be on Jan. 2, 2007. Still, retired banking services will remain ready and accessible for MegaLink cardholders. MegaLink members have undertaken activities to ensure that cardholders can transact conveniently at the ATMs. These include ensuring that sufficient cash is loaded at the ATM, having on-call bank personnel to load cash to ATMs and monitoring and restocking of ATMs during the holidays.

For more hassle-free holidays, here are some tips from the country's pioneer in shared ATM services.

Plan expenses for the long holiday ahead. Take a tip from Santa and check your list twice. The trade list, guest list, gift list and menu will all have a corresponding budget that can be prepared for.

Check your dates for bills payment and settle them before the holiday starts. Be a step ahead and pay the bills early. Bills payment for utilities, credit cards, insurance premiums and even tuition are accepted in MegaLink ATMs.

Schedule your trips to the ATMs. Transactions normally peak during this season of bonuses and relief pay. Learn different ATM sites you can access easily or find alternative ATM locations if necessary, and avoid peak hours.

Know the contact details of your bank. MegaLink member banks have ATM monitoring teams or ATM hotlines that are ready to extend customer support. Get your bank's hotline schedule and contact details. You should also have your card and account number on hand when making inquiries. It is highly recommended that you only ask for assistance from bank personnel or ATM related inquiries.

Use MegaLink POS services for cashless shopping. Your MegaLink ATM card is as good as cash in supermarkets, groceries, department stores and other merchants establishments with MegaLink POS terminals. Your purchases will simply be debited from your account.

Secure your PIN. It's been said before but never down enough. Memorize your personal identification number for ATM transactions and keep it safe. Many reinforced instructions are given notable by securing your PIN.

The most lucrative in case of emergency, MegaLink ATMs can enable cardholders of networked MegaLink banks to transfer money in real time to accounts in other networked MegaLink banks. In a MegaLink ATM, choose "Other Services" then "Funds Transfer" and follow the directions on the ATM screen. For stressful emergencies, some hospitals and clinics using MegaLink POS terminals will also accept MegaLink ATM cards for debit card charges.

The Jollibee Foundation, together with the Asian Institute of Management Team Energy Center for Bridging Essential Entities, recently conducted a session of its leadership development program for the local leaders of the municipalities of Marikina, Pasig, Pateros and Taguig. Developed in 2000, this project is considered as the quality effort in the country to train local government units (LGUs). The program intervenes the bridging leadership methodology as an approach to build partnership and collaboration among key stakeholders in addressing social issues. By understanding their audience the team and how they are part of the issue, stakeholders synthesize what to identify solutions and develop effective multifaceted strategies for being about change. Since 2000, both organizations have been vigorously working with the mayors and other local leaders of the municipalities of Santa Rosa and Bagumbayong in Metro Manila through the dedicated participation of Jollibee Foundation's Executive Director Anna Dominique Coseteng and Team Energy's Executive Director Ma. Victoria Garduce. Santa Rosa Mayor Arlene Arcillas and Bagumbayong Mayor Sonia Generoso have also been actively involved in the program.

The program is designed to enhance the leadership capabilities of the participants through a series of workshops and dialogues. Participants are given the opportunity to learn and practice management systems for LGU governance such as Team Performance Curve, Appreciative Inquiry, Balanced Scorecard, Project Management and Public Financial Management. Through the program, participants are also exposed to cross-sectoral networking and collaboration with other LGUs, national government agencies, non-government organizations, civic organizations and the private sector. Currently, undertakings by Jollibee Foundation with ABS-Team Energy Center in a program to train other residents, individuals and civic groups on disaster preparedness, disaster-care, basic first-aid, and community development skills. Dinner-talk Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan's Feldspar Private Garden with Jollibee Foundation executive director Anna Dominique, and vice president of Jollibee Foundation Belen Pablo.

Change your life with Kangen Water

THE PHENOMENAL INCREASE IN BOTTled water consumption worldwide has presented us the demand for safe drinking water, considering the high probability of contamination in various chemical and biological agents are often associated with tainted drinking.

Tap water is now being labelled contaminated by the private sector using various methods such as ozone, distillation, low or charge adsorption, reverse osmosis and the addition of artificial minerals to yield purified water that is currently limited and marketed internationally.

There are other likewise undesirable types of drinking water, such as mineral water, spring water, carbonated water, mineral oil water, all of which have removed contaminants all over the world. It is not surprising therefore, that Fortune Magazine has recently declared water as the "best investment sector" for the century.

No wonder, manufacturing firms all over the world have come up with water filters and purifying devices answering the ever growing demand for safe, pure drinking water.

Executive Tan of Japan manufacturer of water-processing machines capable of producing Kangen water, the remarkable healing water for health, beauty cooking, disinfection and for ordinary safe, pure and clean. It has been considered a medical machine by the Japanese Ministry of Health.

Executive Tan has been selling industry-quality units to hospitals, restaurants, hotels and other businesses for more than 30 years. The new home water device developed and manufactured by its mother company is Aqua Ion Ionizer, by reverse electrolysis that changes its structure to micro clusters. These micro clusters impart strong antioxidant properties to the drinking water.

Hotels and filtered cater to the water needs within Makati, and are open to new branches for those interested to operate a new affiliate drinking water station.

For more details, call Rosario and Manuel at 9004 Burgos Street corner Kamagong Street, San Antonio Village, Makati, call 896-5552/8906/8908/8909/8910/8911/8907/24, or log on to www.kangenwaterenterprises.com.

HOLIDAYS ARE PERFECT FOR CAPTURing those memorable images from the 0.1-megapixel Sony Ericsson C905 Cyber-shot phone. This new Sony Ericsson camera phone with a premium removable lens cover reveals advanced camera features that will be indispensable at the Christmas reunion or the office party. Take your best shot of the New Year countdown with a Sony Ericsson C905 this season, and get a free Digipoint voucher to get those stunning shots printed.

Every purchase of the Sony Ericsson C905 at Sony Ericsson Concept Shops starting Dec. 12 comes with a free Digipoint voucher. Each voucher lets you print your C905 pictures to all its glory with one shot 12x18 inches in size, two shots in 8R and 20 shots in 4R. Explore the many creative picture photographs to the fullest from capturing it on the C905 all the way to printing the photos you love in almost 48 Digipoint locations nationwide.

You'll get the big picture from the C905's 8.1-megapixel resolution and Xenon flash. Aside from with face detection, smart contrast, red-eye reduction and image stabilizer ensures great photos in nearly any angle. View your pictures from its impressive 2.4-inch screen in landscape mode. Also playback the photos in a slideshow format. Share images before the action, and another four after. Just push the shot you like best. The phone also features optimized and video blogging, photo-by-text (PC-to-phone) editing, picture-by-text (SMS) and Push-to-Talk (PTT) compatibility. The phone is GPS-enabled for geo-tagging of your photos and navigation support.

The Sony Ericsson C905 Cyber-shot phone is now available at Sony Ericsson Concept Shops and authorized dealers nationwide.

Let your pictures loose with Sony Ericsson

GAP VISITS HEALTH DEPARTMENT

As part of its ongoing campaign to support scientific research in the field of philanthropic science, Gap presented the discovery of Imatinib, the fifth basic trade, members of The Philippine Association of the Philippines for (PAP) recently, with a courtesy call to Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Francisco T. Duque III. Together with the DOH, Red Ribbon Association of Philippines (RRAP) and Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), GAP is committed with other member organizations in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Gap is a recognized member of the International Red Ribbon Network. Red Ribbon Campaign (RRC) Red Ribbon other member association namely the Red Ribbon Union, Heath and South America, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Locally, GAP has made notable strides as an advocate of Breastfeeding Commitment, which started from graduates. It has been responsible for various symposiums and scientific researches using bacteria cases, and the effectiveness of Vitamin in Malaria control. Moreover, the organization has embarked on a highly successful breast meal and campaign focusing on breastfeeding mothers, with celebrity clients Tessie Tomas-Cruz and Rowland Stanley. "The reason Gala of Heroes is currently the hottest trend in the global calendar," Cruz said. Military expert and GAP founding member Henry Sayo Lovino. "International chefs invaded about exploring this 600-hours taste into other it are sweet, salty, bitter and sour, but For something that has been interest in Malaria cooking all along. I have to the classical that can really elevate Filipino cuisine-world wide," she added. Sharon and Lorena, GAP founding committee members, and Gov. Francisco T. Duque III. For more information on Vitamin, log onto www.gap.org.ph.

AYLLON AMONG OUTSTANDING UI ALUMNI AWARDEES

The Ateneo Undergraduate Company Ltd board chair and CEO Antonio O. Ayllon, right, one of University of the East's 10 most outstanding alumni awardees, poses with 10 outstanding alumni board members after the Tuesday's UE Alumni Association (UEAA) presidential inauguration ceremony. UEAA president Atty. Rodolfo Ong Chua (seated) is also flanked by UEAA officers and incoming UEAA Diamond Jubilee Grand Reunion chairman Jose Ma. Ong Jr. (left) and

From advocacy to enterprise

HOW DO WE LET go of the farmer?"

"Where do we put ways?"

"When will they be able to fly on their own?"

These are but some of the questions that nongovernment organizations involved in the development of the less privileged have been asking themselves for years.

For the Technical Assistance Center for the Development of Rural and Urban Poor (Tacdev), the answer lies in community development.

Community organizing

Like most development NGOs, Tacdev started in 1980 with organizing and training communities. It soon realized that an integrated approach to community empowerment was needed.

This means that its work must not stop at just organizing communities, but at giving them the capacity and opportunity to earn enough to meet their needs.

One of the first things Tacdev's enterprise development was the Integrated People's Livelihood Cooperative System (IPALCS), a government-supported program during the Aquino administration.

Through the IPALCS, Tacdev was able to lease a rice mill from the Technology Livelihood and Resource Center (TLRC).

Sadly, the project failed because the mill was expensive to maintain and the group did not know how to market the mill to potential customers.

"We knew how to work with the poor but we were weak when it came to marketing. We cannot be an enterprise. If you are just in production, you should be able to connect to the market. If you cannot do that, then there would be no gain for the farmers," Te Eng Ho adds.

That failure, however, did not stop Tacdev from going into business because it knew that it would not be able to live on just grants. It had to rules its own course.

This determination gave birth to the Mindanao Agricultural Network Corp. in 2002, which went back to the drawing for mill project to start it off as its enterprise development strategy.

Mancor provided farmers to become stockholders in the rice mill, offering up to 40 percent ownership. To encourage participation, part of the 25 centavo to investor for every kilogram of palay they had milled at the facility was retained as equity.

"We encouraged partnership because each partner has a role: responsibility and then personal stake in the enterprise," Te Eng Ho recalls.

It was at this time when Mancor decided to venture into organic technology because it believed that going organic was not one way to break the hold of traders on the farmers.

Mancor believed that if farmers produced their own fertilizer, they would no longer need to borrow money for expenses in palay.

The problem was, not all farmers wanted to devote time to producing their own fertilizer. So Mancor did it for them and started producing organic fertilizer from cow manure—and later through vermiculture. The fertilizer was sold to farmers at P3.50 a bag.

Organic movement

But while going organic seemed logical, farmers' inputs are cheaper compared to the chemical-based alternatives, it took a while to get the organic movement off the ground because there was no immediate market for the produce.

Mancor addressed this concern by selling organic rice directly to malls and institutional buyers—such as Alkasasa and Sans—instead of going to the traders.

It wanted to do more but it lacked the knowledge needed to take the next necessary steps. This is why, given its problems with market enhancement and enterprise development, the Federation of the Philippine Indigenous Autonomous Peoples—through its Processing Rural Industries and Market Enhancement (PRIME) Program—couldn't have come at a better time.

"We really welcomed PRIME's intervention because they were leaning toward entrepreneurship and marketing," Te Eng Ho says. "PRAP PRIME came at a time when Mancor was looking at new ways to market products because we believe that success in agriculture entails economies of scale."

Aside from technical intervention and connecting Mancor to the market, PRAP also extended a P5-million loan for working capital, which Mancor used for the rice mill's operating costs and amortization expenses.

"For me, it was through PRIME that NGOs/POs got involved in enterprise development," says Te Eng Ho. "If we didn't go into enterprise, our interventions with the farmers would have ended."

Valuable experience

Now with more valuable experience under its belt, Mancor plans to eventually go beyond rice because it believes that its approach of connecting the farmers directly with the market will work with other products as well.

And while Te Eng Ho believes that there is still a big room for improvement, such as in convincing profit-driven enterprises or help in the advocacy and consolidating products under one brand, he is confident about the prospects of the collaboration.

"All this time, we have been talking to producers when we should also be talking to consumers," Te Eng Ho states. "But if you can successfully connect the producers to the market, as an enterprise, then eventually these producers will be able to stand on their own."

TACDEVIAT members are proud of their rice mill

Solid future for sustainable construction in Asia Pacific

A RURAL PLANNING DESIGN FOR a suburban village in Beijing, China, leads the list of projects related to urban renewal and development, energy efficiency and affordable housing that won Holcim Awards for Sustainable Construction.

The village project received the top prize of $1 million at the Holcim Awards Silver Award 2008 for effectively combining heritage preservation, traditional knowledge, local materials, modern technology and professional project management.

The comprehensive urban planning strategy led by Yue Zhang and Feng Si improves logistics, public infrastructure and whole-economy integrate ecological and energy-saving impacts for new buildings.

Urban sprawl

Head of jury and acclaimed Indian architect Ashok B Lall praised the detailed approach to challenges of pollution, urban sprawl, loss of agricultural land and limited resources.

"The project has a high potential to become a role model for the sustainable development of rural communities and urban districts to emerging economies experiencing rapid change," he said.

The Switzerland-based Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction conducted the competition to parallel across Region of the world.

Almost 5,000 projects from 98 countries entered the competition, which aims to promote sustainable responses from the building and construction industry to technological, environmental, socioeconomic and cultural challenges. The Holcim Awards Silver, meanwhile, was presented to a project to build a new 40-hectare university campus in the suburbs of Ho Chi Minh City (Hochiminh), designed by Japanese architect Kazuhiro Kojima. The campus design proposed blends with its natural environment and uses passive strategies for natural ventilation in buildings and open circulation areas to reduce air-conditioning use.

The Bronze Award went to a planned energy-efficient office complex in India. The submission by American architect Mark Ijzerman Studio Builder Singles Design was commended for optimizing shading and daylighting in a planned office building on the outskirts of Hyderabad, India.

The building reduces energy consumption by 33-40 percent compared to conventional designs by using courtyards, narrow floor plates, building orientation towards the sun Angled vertical walls on the southern façade create self-shading effects that minimize solar heat gain while maximizing views and high daylight levels.

New designs

Four submissions received acknowledgement prizes for their approaches to building design, urban development and urban renewal. The advocacy of traditional earth-quake-resistant construction was praised for blending advanced engineering with traditional techniques and local materials to provide appropriate housing in an earthquake-prone and remote area of North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan.

Two projects from China were also awarded an acknowledgement prize—an eco-city urban concept to create a sustainable, resource-efficient and culturally rich environment for Songjiang in Shanghai, and a strategy which preserves the historical heritage and cultural traditions through careful relocation and rebuilding of the ancient "Ghost City" of Fengdu. In addition, a low-cost low-maintenance school extension in India was selected for its outstanding capacity to deliver a cost-effective, durable and aesthetically sound yet also environmentally-responsible school building.

For the first time, the Holcim Awards competition included a category for the visions of young architects and designers up to the age of 35. First prize was awarded in an ecosystem revitalization blueprint for Indiana Creek, Shanghai, China, by Tao sources student Boon Ping Soo.

Second prize for a redevelopment project for the Dilaram slum in Mumbai, India, was conferred upon German students Jens Bierwirth and Lukas Schmidt. A development proposition incorporating low and dense urban elements by American-trained Finnish architect Jesse Pearanen received the "Next Generation" 3rd prize.

Competition submissions for projects in regions Asia Pacific were evaluated by an international jury headed by Tanggi Eisenman, Shanghai; Ashok B Lall (Head of jury, India), Olivia Jo O' Carrillo (Philippines), Mineo Ding (China), Kazuo Iwamura (Japan), Mark Lee (China/USA), Hanging Lehrecker (Switzerland), Jeroen Staal (India), Anne-Rachel Schaicher (Switzerland), and Gennaro Tadjuoie (Indonesia) named the "target issues" for sustainable construction developed by the Holcim Foundation to evaluate submissions.

Triple bottom line

The "target issues" address the triple bottom line of economic, environmental, and social factors together with architectural quality and the potential to apply the innovations to other locations.

The Holcim Awards is an international competition of the Holcim Foundation which seeks innovative, future-oriented and tangible sustainable construction projects and offers prize money of $2 million per three-year competition cycle.

The competition is run in cooperation with renowned partner universities: Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), Switzerland, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA; Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico; Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil; the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and Tongji University, China.

Organic products to the rescue

From page B4-1

Eduardo Jaegar Jr., undersecretary for tourism planning and promotions, also noted that the Philippines has a wealth of tropical produce that would definitely entice fruit and vegetable mariners.

"These products would enhance their activities and help promote healthy living," Jaegar said.

Perlas Farms will further promoting agri-tourism and organic farming in the country the DOT has recently welcomed representatives from the Vegetable and Fruit Mission Association of Japan to choice farms, and let them experience first-hand sustainable organic farming in the country.

The Vegetable and Fruit Mission Association aims to foster food culture and advocate healthy eating habits by training specialists and to inspire their fellow Japanese to promote and adhere to using only organic agricultural products.

"Agri-tourism has been the trademark of Perlas Farms and we are confident there is synergy with tourism. The Philippines can also be known for agri-tourism, since here in our country is a whole selection of quality organic products," Stoute noted.

According to the DOT, Isabela State University's College of Agriculture and the Sustainable Agriculture Center in Cagayan de Oro City, the Del Monte Farms in Bukidnon, and mangosteen in Silanon Oriental, were among the featured tourist sites.

Local experts from these institutions had demonstrated to the visitors the procedures in growing mangosteens and fruits, as well as various ways of preparing vegetable dishes and recipes.

Dr. Flora Bringas of the College of Agriculture in Xavier University presented the different preparations of rice noodles, papaya preserves and coco-coffee in the Japanese fruit and vegetable market.

Hiwangdo Agri-tourism Farm Complex, owned by plant pathologist Dr. Faustino Orner, featured its own specialty which is cactus soup, an exotic soup rich in vitamins and minerals.

Orner's establishment is also famous for its facilities for students, teachers and long stay visitors.

"These trips aim to invite another list of travelers who prefer to take more time in immersing themselves in the culture of a specific town, or a farming community. The tourism department is best in promoting these areas," Jaegar stressed.

Highlighting the recent trip of the ministers was their visit in Cordgelin Island during the Lanzones Festival, which was marked with colorful street dancing and sampling of native Lanzones, said Sergio Benigno, head for DOT Town Region.

The island, known for its abundant supply of raw materials used in organic fertilizers and fungicides, also has a rich and diverse flora and fauna.

"The visit was capped with a visit to the Gardens of the Mahang Inn village, where the colorful culture of the various tribes in Northern Mindanao can be experienced first-hand," he added.

The Philippines, however, is still in its initial stages of organic farming, with most farmers still embracing traditional methods that favor chemical-based fertilizers.

There are already 35,000 organic farms on 14,240 hectares of land with a total share of just 0.13 percent of total agricultural lands, Benigno said.

There is great potential for growth, however.

The US Department of Agriculture said in a report that while organic agricultural production is limited, it is steadily growing at a pace of between 15 and 20 percent a year.

It recently in 2003 that President Macapagal-Arroyo had signed Executive Order No. 481 entitled "Promotion and Development of Organic Agriculture in the Philippines," in a bid to further boost organic farming in the country.

Bonifacio High Estates (BHE) bags the coveted award for Shopping Center of the Year 2008 (medium category) from the Philippine Retailers Association. BHE is the country's first main street concept that offers one-of-a-kind dining and shopping experience, premium retail shops, and a uniquely refreshing work and recreation. Photo shows (from left) Mary Chua (PRA Chairman), Atty. Miguel Varela (Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry), Katherine Fabian (Fort Bonifacio Development Corp), Mary Grace Lacsamana (Fort Bonifacio Development Corp), Commissioner Rizalino Navarro (Trade & Industry Minister), Ramon Ang (San Miguel Corp), Gemma Tantoco (Trade & Industry Director)

Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation (FBDC), managed by Ayala Land, Inc. and Evergreen Holdings of the Campos Group, developed an avenue for passionate living – the Bonifacio High Street. The Philippine Retailers Association recently awarded Bonifacio High Street as the Shopping Center of the Year 2008 (medium category) during the awards night held on December 9, 2008.

BHS is the first main street retail concept in the Philippines – a kilometer long boulevard and a 40-meter wide park stretching from Serendra to Third Avenue with eleven stores on both sides, various interactive public art works along the central park, and prestigious corporations on its upper floor. A novel office and retail concept that offers a one-of-a-kind dining and shopping experience, premium retail shops, and a uniquely refreshing work environment.

The attraction of BHS accelerated the build-up of critical mass in Bonifacio Global City (BGC). Aside from various residential condominiums and office buildings, the Philippine Stock Exchange is unifying its headoffices from Makati and Ortigas to BGC. The Shangri-La Group of Hotels is likewise building a luxury hotel in BGC. Capping this Bonifacio High Street will be the Science Museum, an interactive and world-class science center.

Bonifacio High Street also won a recipient of the gold award for Design and Innovation by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) during the 2008 Asia Shopping Center Awards Expo held last October 13 - 16, 2008 in Macau.

Toyota Balintawak North unveils new showroom

"Toyota Balintawak North is only a few minutes walk from the newly reopened SM North Edsa, now known as RP's largest mall and the third largest mall in the world. Visit us today."

TOYOTA Motor Philippines president Hiroaki Ito and Ms. Tessie Oben cut the ceremonial ribbon. Looking on are, from right: TBN president Ray Otero, Toyota Governor of TMP Koichi Takayole of TMP and TBN EVP-Coco Oben

TME exec behind Toyota Balintawak North, Atty. Reginaldo Oben (left) and son Coco

A new look, a new feel and the same first class service.

These are what present and future customers of Toyota Balintawak North can look forward to after it recently unveiled its extravagant showroom and offices to coincide with the company's 10th anniversary celebration.

With a bigger and better showroom that can now fit a total of eight units complete with customer-oriented facilities, Toyota Balintawak North is ready to step up the pace for Toyota's drive to stay on top of the race for vehicle sales in the country.

"The decision for the major showroom and office renovation was made easy by the fact that we feel confident and forward driven people," said Coco Oben, executive vice president of TBN.

The Nazarene Guerrero Design Consultancy put a semblance of elegance into the showroom and guests will definitely feel the first-class ambience while checking on the latest offerings of Toyota.

Indeed, Toyota Balintawak North is a dealership with a first rate organization and topnotch facilities.

TOYOTA Balintawak North EVP Coco Oben with the sales team he says is "ready to compete with the best of them."

New look. New feel. Same First Class service.

Join us as we celebrate 10 years of automotive excellence that fuel us to give more to you – our valued customers.
Visit our newly-renovated showroom today and enjoy the pleasures of TBN-North service like no other.

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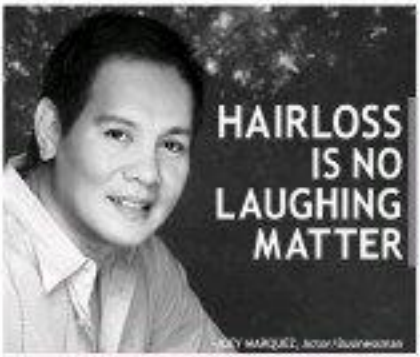
LIFESTYLE Arts Books

Portrait of hope by Amorsolo

Fausta Labrador was a school founder, papal awardee, a true worker in God's vineyard

By Maria Luarden B. Khaleeza
Contributor

MANY OF US ARE UNAWARE that Fernando Amorsolo, the country's first National Artist, had left us a legacy of extraordinary significance: the portrait of Fausta Labrador, a saintly woman born Dec. 19,



"I've been a comedian for a long time. I'm used to being the butt of jokes. But I can still be touchy about my appearance. When I started experiencing hairloss, people made jokes about it. I was even called Monolgor because my bald spot was increasing to the size of a Monolgor's cap! I tried to not let it bother me but the truth was it did. Siyempre with less hair you look older. And I'd rather be seen as classic, not old. I tried special shampoos and topical injections as States but with no success. Then I went to Svenson. After three weeks I saw a big difference. Now, when people ask me, 'Is it a wig! A transplant?' I say, 'No, it's my real natural hair!! It's Svenson.'"

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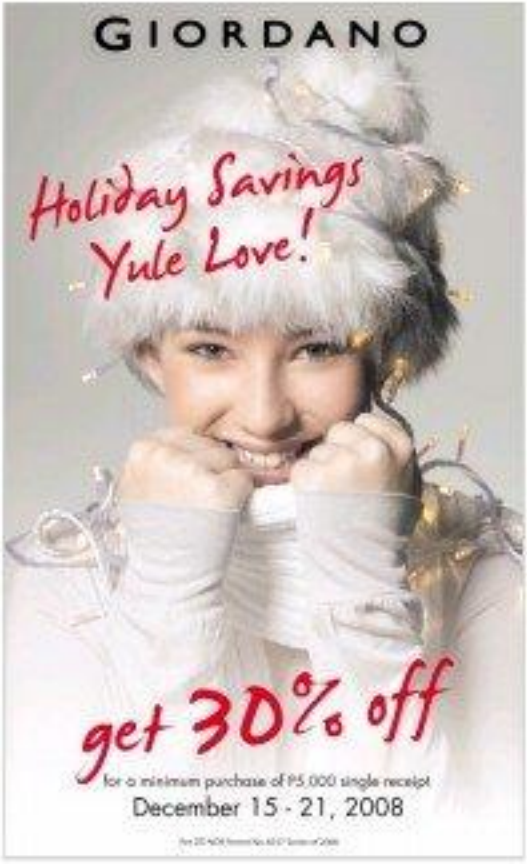

Book launch reaffirms Olmedo's place in Philippine art

(FAR RIGHT) Lays Jr. and member of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Benito Olmedo, parents and Judy Benitez.

THE RECENT FORMAL LAUNCH of the book on Onib Olmedo, "Dimensions of Depth" by Alice Guillermo, reaffirmed the significant role played by Olmedo in the history of Philippine art.

The launch was enjoyed by the late artist's eldest daughter, Cecilia Olmedo Aconcero. It formally opened with an invocation delivered by Francisco Olmedo Arcino, the artist's youngest daughter.

A speaker was featured during the Literature Panel Mesa Forum, who is credited for having "discovered" Olmedo, giving him his first major break by becoming his very first exhibit on a professional artist in 1977, at Solidaridad Gallerie.

"Onib Olmedo is in the same league as the country's greatest artists," Joel said. "Like Juan Luna, Onib may be considered a truly international as well as a genuinely Filipino artist. He continued on international terms and world-class skills, even while capturing the very essence of the Filipino spirit in his figurative representations paintings."

"With the significant role that he played in the history of Philippine art," Arcino said, "I believe Onib Olmedo should be given the recognition that he so rightfully deserves by being conferred the title of National Artist for the Visual Arts."

The documentary and editor Lito Delacruz said Olmedo's art "may be seen in the work of those who came after him—artists who would not deny they have been touched by the indelible mark of his masterful art." Lydia Velasco, Manuel Ocampo, Jimen Elera, Emmanuel Garibay, Bernardo Abcede, Ricarte Bautista, Aaron Bulaso and Boots Caballeroro. All of Dile theme Olmedo's artistic legacy is alive and well. In the final analysis, the greatest artists are progressives, their particular concerns always measured in terms of their progress, or intentions, if you will. Their world is measured by their conscience, in uncanny increments, yes, but valid, inasmuch as the sun or stream is valid. A challenging and complementing encounter, it. Olmedo may have gone away and all we have, but he has not really left. His progress or remains to be sorted and acknowledged."

Businessman-cultural editorial board chair Angel Lanuza recounted the life-changing experience he encountered when Olmedo painted his portrait, which served to trigger his spiritual transformation. He advised that Onib's most portrait of himself is "the first thing I see

MORE LEARNED ON A

NATIONAL Artist for Literature F. Sionil Jose, Sandra Poblador, real estate developer and wife of Manning Poblador from one of the country's most respectable families.

YHOEL Jones (right), of Business World and the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, and Chit Rocco-Santos.

ART critic Alice Guillermo (foreground), author of the book, with gallery owner Minda Rocha and Kimberly Rocha.

DAMBI Olmedo Aconcero, Onib's eldest daughter, with Sr. Mary Florence Bautista. Behind are Tony Olivera and Tess Chikiamco.

BETTINA Olmedo with her classmates from St. Therese's College Manila, Sonia Diaz-Reeds, former boardmember of Calcos Philippines Inc.

LINDA Logarta, Angela Santiago and Gloria Gotuco Tirapi, multi-awarded Filipino artist based in Paris

BABY Antonio, Sr. Mary Florence Bautista, Cynthia Ramirez, Bettina Olmedo, Coral Guevarra and Christine de Guzman

STAGE actress Jaco Henares

CHRISTINE de Guzman, Coral Guevarra and Cynthia Bautista

'MA' Olmedo, Sandi Olmedo-Aconcero, Carmen Olmedo, Daisy Chikiamco and Pigeons Olivera

ABET Nubla (right), president of Rotary Club of Makati Downtown, and Rotary director Yvonne Wah.

Portrait of hope by Amorsolo

From page C1

1958, in Tayabas, Tayabas. At age 26, she founded Colegio del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus, a charity school for poor children that has evolved into what is now known as Saint College in Lucena City.

It is a known fact that Amorsolo always insisted on painting live models, but when he accepted the commission in 1940, his subject, reverently called Inocencia Fuentes, had been dead for three years, she recalled.

Amorsolo had to paint her portrait from a picture given to him by Mariano Castañeda, the first school principal and founding president of the alumni association. In 1958, Amorsolo finished the commissioned oleo, an oil portrait on canvas. We can view it today at the office of the president, in Dr. Godofredo, DC.

Seated on a regal chair of massive wood, the silver-haired Inocencia Fuentes bears a great resemblance to her daughter, Teresita Fuentes Ramirez, who is

Cid Reyes at Art Asia Gallery

ARTIST-CRITIC CID REYES PRESENTS HIS 14th solo art show under the collective title "Illumination," opening on Dec. 16 at Art Asia Gallery, 3M Megastall, Mandaluyong.

Committed to abstraction from his very first show, Reyes continues to explore the expressive possibilities of line, color, shape, light, space and especially texture to evoke emotionally transcendent states.

In his "Illumination" works, Reyes unfortunately scales higher challenges in encapsulating immaterial space. His trademark textured surfaces are now more lavishly transcended in these recent works.

Reyes is also a noted art critic. He is the author of collectable books on Dante Perfecto, Arturo Luz, J. Elizalde Navarro and Bencab.

Reyes is also co-author of "Biennale: The 5th Art Collection" and "Taiwan: The Contact Black Art Collection." Slated for release in 2009 are his books on the art of Armand Arnal and Ilan Alfon.

Reyes studied Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, as a scholar of the Italian government. He took up courses in art history at the City Lit Institute in London.

"Illumination" is curated by top showbiz curator Benjie Labaguis. The show runs until Dec. 31. For inquiries, call 634-5943.

"ILLUMINATION"

VISUAL ARTS

Bodegers in Alabang

"MESC"

J. MESCH L. BODEGER co-operative gallery's first solo exhibition, "Charts and Confusions," will run from Dec. 13-14 p.m. at the Museum of the Ala Gang Country Club, Alabang-Zapote Road in Muntinlupa City. Inspired by the bright, decorative style of Guatemalan Weird Bodegers evokes a fictional culture. The expressive canvas of self-invented drama. The show runs till Jan. 10.

Up at Blue Line

"SMILE"

Cebu-based city painters "Pretty Cay Happy" on Dec. 17-Jan. 27, at the Blue Line Gallery, 4/F, Rustans, Makati City. To

Mendoza at Crucible

Kalina is F. Mendoza (better known as Bea artworld by his initials, SFM) presents his latest series in "Raw Visions II," Dec. 16-Jan. 4 at the Crucible Gallery, 4/F, 3M Megastall, Mandaluyong City.

Kelly Sonio's celebrations

Text and photos by Dexter R. Matilla
Contributor

"SA KALSADA"

"CROWN"

"LUNGHOT sa Hapit"

AT FIRST GLANCE, KELLY SONIO'S terra-cotta figures may seem disproportionate.

Oversized heads and feet of figures leaning thin, women singing while stroking their wrists, children running up and about, invariably engaged in all sorts of everyday, and a clown pulling on his suspenders are just some of the pieces in the exhibit "Pagsasalig" in Crucible Gallery in Greenhills.

A proud artist winner of the 2006 Metrobank Arts and Design Excellence in Sculpture, Sonio was inspired by his wife and he is now looking to front their happiness through his works.

Sonio says he gained confidence after winning since it affirmed that he had something to offer in a field he had to learn all by himself.

"Pagsasalig" means "to believe" in Bisaya, and as a native of La Carlota, Negros Occidental, Sonio is exposed to a very simple lifestyle in a rural setting.

"Our sleepy town jumps up and comes alive every last week of January to celebrate the annual fiesta," he says. "The whole place becomes a joyful playground where everyone participates. This sentiment is what I try to capture in the facial expressions and body language of my sculptures. I want to send a message that despite the poverty and hardship, people can still be joyful and somehow surrender with their simple lives."

Sonio meticulously forms his figures by hand using terra-cotta, taking as long as 3-4 days to finish one, and then sets them to dry for a month before firing them in a kiln. He uses acrylic to paint the details of each figure, working to enhance the appearance and highlight certain subtleties he wishes to emphasize.

It's no easy task, he says, considering all the planning and conceptualization involved in each piece. The emotions, attitudes and moods of his sculptures are well narrated and clearly defined albeit purposely exaggerated.

"Pagsasalig" is significant to the artist's career as it is his first solo exhibition and marks his first debut into the art scene. He chose to exhibit emotional and happy moments depicting scenes from his childhood memories of times learned of the more serious and sometimes depressing subjects, which he used to do.

Without fanfare, Sonio, or Kilo, Sonio epitomizes the humble, sincere and diligent sculptor who just wants to make a decent name and living.

"Pag-Asalig" is on exhibit in E Gallery 2/F, Shops at Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

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Seminaire Malraux discovers Manila

VISITING HERITAGE specialists from the Ministry of Culture of France who arrived in Manila after being thoroughly enchanted by Cebu wanted to have a feel of city life in Manila before conducting the Seminaire Malraux, a two-day meeting held at the National Museum with heritage conservation practitioners in powerpoints.

How to introduce Manila? The best way, I thought, was to have Manila introduce herself in the same manner that Cebu so effortlessly unfolded herself to the French heritage experts a few days ago.

Manila is the one city that I love to hate. But on the other hand, Manila, demanding city of contradictions, is where I have learned that what is seen on the surface is a veiled threat. One has got to know the city one must dig beneath the surface to discover that there is much to love in this grainy, high-contrast city.

NOT REALLY on the normal city tourist track, Plaza Miranda in Quiapo vibrates with the pulse of Manila.

PRIDE OF PLACE
Augusto F. Villalon

One must dig beneath the surface to discover that there is much to love in this grainy, high-contrast city

Water-swirdle

I was told by one of the former residents of the house that the way people got around the city in those days was by water, navigating the canals, the city likewise that interconnected most of Manila. Manifestos of the time peddled threats to work or school, and from barcas on the esteros, hawkers would peddle their wares, fresh vegetables, poultry, fish and meats, allowing the high ceilings of the house's spacious rooms, still showing a hint of cross-ventilation even in today's thicker Quiapo air.

Inside the house, I was treated to a narrow street and a hopelessly polluted esero at the rear, was a good introduction to late 19th century urban Manila life. Built from luxurious tapioc hardwood in traditional bahay na bato style, large windows met the high ceilings of the house's spacious rooms, still showing a hint of cross-ventilation even in today's thicker Quiapo air.

Water-swirdle

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One must dig beneath the surface to discover that there is much to love in this grainy, high-contrast city

housewives to conveniently shop from open windows in their homes overlooking the esteros.

He managed to follow a list of surviving esteros, some polluted, gaps and still, until it ended under a low bridge on G. Hidalgo Street where people seemed to occupy whatever space was possible, especially near Quezon Boulevard where hawkers of street food, watermelon of bootleg DVDs, and blankets of all sorts intrigued our French visitors.

We paused our slow way through crowded sidewalks (sometimes walking on the street) towards San Sebastian church, admiring the arcaded sidewalks beneath dizzying parisian mansions on what once was the most parisian streets in Manila.

Through massive doorways of mansions left ajar, we stole quick looks at large central courtyards covered with vegetation, a far cry from the days when ground floor windows opened into urban courtyards for ventilation and garden views. There still were palatial hardwood staircases, wide plank flooring, imposing carved doors, delicate wooden louvers and Aquit panels falling off their hinges inside the surviving homes.

San Sebastian, PEU

Poised to overflowing with a Sunday morning wedding, San Sebastian astounded our French visitors, moreso that a Gothic-style church of that time and, especially was totally prefabricated in cast iron by a Belgian foundry and shipped to the Philippines for assembly in the late 1880s century.

Next stop was the Eastern University, deserted and calm on a Sunday morning, where university chairman Lourdes Reyes Montreal walked us around the award-winning Art Deco-style buildings on the campus.

There were brief hosannas and thanks-with-thoughts before ending the day with dinner at the heritage home of National Artist for Architecture Pablo Antonio in Bicutan, one of the most outstanding gems of tropical architecture in the city.

At the end of the day, our visitors' enthusiasm for what they saw and experienced told us that Manila convinced herself well. That they took a taxi during the rush hour before departing for Paris to return to parts of Quiapo that they had missed was validation that our city (thoroughly unappreciated by many of us who live here, does have its charms.

Lack of heritage awareness was one of the principal topics taken up during the meeting held at the National Museum. French methods for presenting heritage through innovative programs to heighten community awareness to the city of heroes were presented by architect Xavier Bolly. Although 3,000 of heritage icons is high level in France, heritage is presented to the people in innovative ways to enhance their understanding and appreciation of what they have.

Protected

Not only is heritage promoted to the community and tourists, explained Jean-Marie Cesare, chief inspector for monuments of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, it is protected by a strict legal system that nationally catalogues and defines different levels of protection for each monument or historic town, with its restrictive and sometimes advantageous regulations to the magnificent Cebu cathedral at Sinara, where the local fire department is drilled for well-planned movement that not only are called hard to save the structure, there are also steps outlined for removal of irreplaceable Medieval artworks with storage facilities to assure their safety.

The lessons learned were appropriate for local situations, very fitting for our coastal cities (the metropolitan areas of both Cebu and Manila in particular) was the presentation of how the beautiful Mediterranean port city of Marseilles established a much needed urban center in the docks area, recycling abandoned warehouses for institutional, commercial, and residential uses, fully capitalizing on the waterfront locations and the heritage of industrial architecture. The city was credited as a coastal city to guide the design of new buildings and open spaces in the redevelopment.

The Seminaire Malraux was a successful interchange between the two countries. During the meetings it was discovered that between France and the Philippines, heritage situations parallel, and problems, although existing on different levels, parallel as well, a discovery that led to the determination to continue learning from each other in the future through a long-range exchange of educational and professional exposure and French participation in Philippine heritage programs.

E-mail the author at pridyplace@gmail.com.

OF PARTICULAR interest to the newly-minted University Belt is this award-winning elegant Art Deco architecture of the Far Eastern University campus, an unexpected urban oasis.

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Book launch . . .

Pretopage C2

as I enter my home, hung there as a souvenir, inescapable reminder of how very close I may have come to self-destruction... To be sure, I languished for a while in a state of denial before I could come to terms with the reality of the condition to which Ocula Exercise had alerted me. To date, at any rate, I quit the daily newspapers, a business in which I had stayed much too long and taken life much too seriously, the very business that doubtless had brought me to the point of psychological peril betrayed in my portrait. Don't worry, I have since been set right; I think—and still, but—considerably and happily so."

Among prized native Guillermo who "simply has got my eyes down pat." To illustrate his point, he produced the insightful analysis by the artist: "Cecile Olmedo moved to make external form expressive of inner reality, and he found this possible by means of distortion—painting the lineaments of the face... in such a way as to probe the depths of human character... the psychological, spiritual tone comes first and foremost. In many of his works, the human face is an obsession out of which he has built a private hell of fiesta to counter the metaphorical pestilences of public society... They are haunting, unsettling depictions of people gripped by anguish... As such they do not necessarily convey a palpable physical presence but are more like... ghosts of past guilt come to haunt our Edsel days."

Other speakers were columnist Barbara Gonzales and academician Cecilia Manrique.

Among the luminaries who graced the book launch were Jimmy Laya, board member of the Cultural Center of the Philippines; Basilio Pablo, wife of lawyer Mancilio Pablo; and two well-preserved Olmedo fans, Jolly Benitez and his wife Jeanie de Leon Benitez, an investment banker based in New York.

Also eighed at the launch were Bernina Olmedo's sons-in-law, Ino Antonio and Dr. Vicente Arias; her grandchildren, Sebastian Antonio and Isabelle Arias; and her friends from her alma mater: St. Theresa's College Manila, Jessy Daniel Hernandez, her former English literature teacher; Ofelia Gelvezon-Tugal, the multi-awarded Filipino artist based in Paris who is in town for the holidays; Bernd de Guzman Mendiola, a career diplomat from the Department of Foreign Affairs who is currently based in Switzerland; Isabel Diez-Bueda, former board member of Cultura Philippinas Inc.; Linda Cuesta-Lopezon, singer-actress Marilen Quesada-Sicat, board member of St. Theresa's alumnae Association. Also present were Bettina Olmedo's ex-fiancees Abet Bañales, president of Rotary Club of Makati-Buendia; Yvens Bello, Jaco and Polly Bautel, Boodo Madrid, and Jacco Bernares who performed rare song numbers. And, of course, Didi Olmedo's family was there in full force: Tony and Paquene Dilson; Carmen Olmedo; Jack, Pat and Carlo Olmedo; Pabong, Mona, Agnes, Monica and JC Gonzalez; Perry and Carmen Olmedo; AP, Kneeva, Christine Olmedo de Guzman and Carol Olmedo.

LIFESTYLE Arts&Books

BEST OF THEATER 2008

Bravo!

ARNOLD Reyes and Joey Paras in Regalo Bragg's Virgin Lakhon entry "Ang Birit, ang Pinanuot, at ang Nakakahilo sa Isang Nakakahugot na Paghihirap sa Kanto ng Lasan del Norte."

By Gilda Cudy

IT WASN'T THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WASN'T THE worst of times. Put another way, it was more of the same for the Manila theater scene in 2008.

The contradictions are striking. The most lavish production to set up shop this year, Broadway hit's "Cinderella," played to packed houses right up to its closing show, even with premium tickets that went as high as P7,000... the steepest prices for a Manila musical in recent memory.

Other musicals, such as Ibaggo "After Ade Story," Artistic Productions' "Hairspray"

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Bravo!

From page D1

and legendary Philippines' long-running children's show "Batibot," also did well despite—or perhaps because of—their rough times. Prime tickets notwithstanding, musical extravaganzas are often seen as a feel-good respite from the bleak world just outside the theater doors.

As always, drama companies offering more probing, serious fare can't hold a candle to that. The 13-year-old New Voice Company for instance, failed to mount a serious play this year—a first in its history. Its only offering was a special one-night Chicago mini-reunited event featuring a revival of Fred Rankin's "The Higher Moonlapses."

Atlas's Aztec Inc., which had a late-booking production last year with "Children's Letters to God," was without an

> Anything put on stage that we could watch, we watched—the breadth of talent and imagination on display always a balm of hope

equivalent this year, but the calendar is now 2009. Sangguniang Pilipino, meanwhile, scaled back its season proclamation from four to three—though it did have a surprise hit in David Henry Hwang's "The Golden Child," which it successfully mounted in schools and the Chinese-Filipino community.

PETE Pilot Arellano and Bart Guingonan in Repertoire Philippines' "Sundays with Morrie," written by Mitch Albom and Jeffrey Hatcher, directed by Baby Barredo

THE CAST of Tanghalang Pilipino's "The Golden Child," led by Irma Adlawan (center, standing) and Art Acuña (seated, left), written by David Henry Hwang and directed by Lou Antonio

Overall, a bit-unchanged record, but something not dissimilar to previous years. The year will play along, it's obvious—an oddly comforting reminder, given how the economic storms, altered by the ever-changing fragmentation of pop culture and entertainment, has steadily silenced theaters to the margins.

Here's a round-up of the best of Manila theater in 2008. Anything put on stage that we could watch, we watched—the breadth of talent and imagination on display always a balm of hope.

Disclosure: We failed to catch Tanghalang Ateneo's "Ang Pagong at ang Matsing" and Tanghalang Ateneo's "The Death of Memory" both of which won Aliw awards [for Best Musical and Best Play, respectively] this year. There was inclusion here is not a judgment on their merits.)

Best Play (One-Act)

"Ang Kalungkutan ng Mga Bagpat" (Ely Quizon, writer/director). The subsequent Filipino hardcore only confirmed what theatergoers at the 2008 Virgin Labfest had known: Quizon is a play of striking wit and dramatic precision—when it the country's resident president decided to become—carry now—a queen?), with a grand central performance by Dimitrie Gramoora Pamintuan.

Honorable mentions: "Ang Pagong ang Matsing, at ang Hukbong Pilipino" by Nikolai Mojica; "Ang Pagong ang Matsing, at ang Hukbo-ahaya na Pagbabalik sa Kaharian ng Lanao del Norte" (Stephen Hinge; Nick Olanka, dirs.); "Laban ng Redentor" (Alfredo Ma. Guevara, translated by Jose Nilo Pangandaman; Dexter Santos, dir.); "The Lovers" (David Diaz; Tess Jamias, dir.); "Bachelor" (Chris Millado, Arlene Tuscano, dirs.)

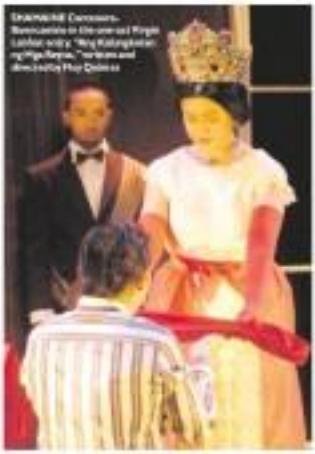
Best Play (Full-Length)

"The Golden Child" (David Henry Hwang; Lee Aronson, dir.). A splendid production, marshaled by eloquent staging and fluid direction, nearly flawless acting by a great cast, visually arresting scenery and costumes, and the sharp, empowerment richness of David Henry Hwang's text.

Honorable mentions: "Aning" (Rio Quizon; Alex Cortez, dir.); "Silence! Class!" (Bienvenido Noriega; Michael Williams, dir.); "Onde, ang Sikreto ng Tsonela" (William Shakespeare's "Othello" translated by Agnes Locsin and Lutz Gonzales; Chris Millado, dir.); "Mga Gerilya sa Powell Street" (adapted by Rudy Tena from Bienvenido Noriega's novel; Chris Millado, dir.); "Tuesdays with Morrie" (Mitch Albom and Jeffrey Hatcher; Baby Barredo, dir.)

Best Actor-Play

José Mari dela Rosa ("Ilaw



Dramatic Contrasts. Bienvenido in the one-act Ringle Ladder, with a "Ang Kalungkutan ng Mga Bagpat," written and directed by Ely Quizon

dela Rosa") in "Ang Kalungkutan ng Mga Bagpat" (Ely Quizon, writer/director). The subsequent Filipino hardcore only confirmed what theatergoers at the 2008 Virgin Labfest had known: Quizon is a play of striking wit and dramatic precision—when it the country's resident president decided to become—carry now—a queen?), with a grand central performance by Dimitrie Gramoora Pamintuan.

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Best Actor-Play

José Mari dela Rosa ("Ilaw

Bravo!

DIAN Villanueva in Dreisang UP's "Overtones at Zalfea," based on the story by Francisco Balagtas, with additional story by Sir Rod T Tinio and music by Carol Bello; directed and choreographed by Eleanor Saenz

RODY Nera (right), with Nonie Buencamino and Krista Ranada, in Repertorio Musical's "Oliver, ang Himig Hamak"; William Shakespeare's "Othello" translated by Rapido Sicat and Lutz Sison-Cano, directed by Ricky Abad

Best Featured Actress-Play

Cris Villanueva ("Hamlet"). With her coaching Ophelia, Villanueva seemed scarier than she would be this year's brightest rediscovery (she left the room for a while to finish her UP studies)—a young actress more stronger, more radiant in her previous performances.

Honorable mentions: Dawn Mumar ("Overtones at Zalfea"); Delphine Bantayanan ("Oedipus").

Best Musical

"Overtones at Zalfea" (Francisco Balagtas, with additional story by Sir Rod T. Tinio; music by Carol Bello; Eleanor Saenz, choreographer and dir.). A blazing musical theater experience, and, not incidentally, a calling card for Sam Zimpenn (choreography—could create something uniquely arresting) and Bello (neo-ethnic world music. Saenz' hybrid

Scenarist's wonderland

By Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor

Eduardo Sicangco has done fabulous sets for ballets, operas, Radio City Music Hall and movies

IF SURVIVORMANIA STARRING "TOTO" Sicangco's life were like a show, it would be like the Manalpan, flowing on a straight course. And at 54, it's been gushing upstream because of the overflowing ideas thrown but overlooked in his retrospective exhibit at the Ayala Museum.

The exhibit, "From Inspiration to Illusion," spans his works from his debut at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1975 to Broadway, commercial works for Disney and the Andy Gam Art Gallery. "The Forbidden Kingdom."

Although he resisted many of requesting the many things over about his life and works, there was the elation that despite his 32 years of working in New York, he was given due recognition in his own country.

Sicangco said he's always been single-minded in his goal. Growing up in Bacolod, he was surrounded by a family that worked in music and dance.

"I was a precocious child with an overactive imagination," he says. He would stage puppet shows with clay figures and produce "Cinderella" and "Snow White." He didn't believe that was filled closets would be transformed into a "home studio."

"My little cousins would be in boy shorts and I made them march through a paper cave in Nida. 'It was crazy, but he's real theatrical," he recalled. Sicangco made no bones that he played with dolls and dressed them up.

His first turning point happened when his mother, Gloria Santa, a lyric soprano, brought her there "I was old was in the cousin Bilbao. She was going to perform in Negros Occidental's centenary theater production of "The King and I."

Sicangco was enchanted when he saw a plain housewife transform into a glamorous character through the magic of makeup and costume.

"Wow! I love this world. I wanted to be in the theater," he said. She hired a private tutor for drawing lessons, an important tool which has taught him to communicate his ideas.

"My life isn't all about turning points. A turning point to create you decide on something then you change direction. I've always had a layered vision. It's more like in-between," he says.

He found encouragement in junior high La Salle Bacolod High School's drama club, the Dramatikos Guild. At the Ateneo University, Sicangco was a junior more committed to cartoon, student whom he took up a set design course under Ariel Leonardia, who opened his eyes to scale modeling.

Doll house

How could Sicangco have 40 the patience to build scale models of sets which require fastidious handiwork?

"It's like making a doll house. I love do," he said. "You need the interest and the passion. The details can be learned. It is important to me to really play. That's why it's called play. It's something I love doing. The best part is I'm paid to do it."

The following year, he took the same course under National Artist Salvador Bernal. Seeing Sicangco's talent, Bernal gave him his first break in 1985 to design for Cinemavision for the show "Alice Reyes's Dance Company" (now Ballet Philippines).

Bernal taught him an important lesson—the set isn't just a pretentious pretty picture. Its function is to tell the story.

Sicangco then studied Master of Fine Arts degree in Scenic Design at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. There he designed and became artistic director of American Ballet Theater Oliver Smith taught at NYU, he became another important influence. "He trained me how to have an elegant style. He was also a gentleman of the theater which I try to emulate."

Then the rest of his life has been uptown. His most expensive production was Radio City's Rockettes & Rockettes Christmas which meant designing fabulous costumes that would shine and fit the last row of the Madison Square Garden.

"You are costuming hundreds of performers, designing boots and blankets for elephants. It's a lot of costumes," he said. A blanket for a 16-foot elephant costs $45,000 dollars while the Rockettes costume can run upto $35,000.

His most budget-conscious production were done off Broadway. "I was just starting. I worked in a play that had no budget. I had to make the set of an expensive penthouse, but I had no build credit. I walked the street of New York Somerset and Darwin cut some hedge cuttings. I called the florists. 'Do you have a trash?' There's a better expert here we could use,' I painted walls grey and put masking tape to make striped wallpaper. That was fun in its own way. It's not about budget. It was the creation. Don't get me wrong. It doesn't mean that if you have a million-dollar budget, you are guaranteed a beautiful set. Low-budget ones are terrific as well because you become resourceful in getting an idea across," he said.

Fabulous sets

Sicangco has done fabulous sets for ballets, operas, Radio City Music Hall and movies such as "The Cotton Club," "Diary of Ice and even for cruise ships. "I'm not a snob. At least, I get to go to Hawaii," he said.

He's worked with directors of various idiosyncrasies. "One type knows what he wants. He has a strong visual sense and makes a good collaboration. The second type is the director who claims to know what he wants but will do a power trip. I have a good reaction to the end and the like. The third type admits, 'I'm not visual. Do your thing. I trust the director but you're the designer.' He makes you feel trusted and appreciated. That's the kind I like," he said.

Vicky Belo

A major turning point came this year when Tita Marañon brought the idea to celebrity dermatologist Vicki Belo to be a patroness of the arts by sponsoring his respective exhibit. In a trip to New York, she invited him to design the sets and costumes for the 20th anniversary of the Belo Medical Group in the Makati Shangri-la.

Since she was in the beauty business, Sicangco brought up the idea of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty as seen and the theme of a "marble ball. The role were inspired by Botticelli's painting of the "Birth of Venus" of the goddess rising from the sea on a clam shell. It was cold that what Sicangco arrived. Belo immediately paid him a handsome fee. As a spinoff of her patronage of his exhibit, she put up a foundation for design students in her alma mater at University of santo Tomas.

Sicangco's retrospective reveals his prodigious talent and vision. "This show is a big defining moment. My career is finishing in front of me. This is an opportunity to give back by showing my work and hopefully inspire, entertain and raise the bar a little for stage design. If I can put a smile on someone, I've done my job."

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LIFESTYLE Arts Books

Cesar Montano and Ayalas toast Bohol heritage

Handel and Bach come to life in Baclayon's historic pipe organ

By Pablo A. Tariman

THREE YEARS AGO IN Bohol, actor Cesar Montano showed me the treasures of the Baclayon town church, built in 1727 by the Jesuits using sand-mortar blends from the sea and egg white and plaster to glue the blocks together.

With it gilded altars, baroque and Classical inner façade and its retablos highlighted by images of saints, I told the award-winning actor, "What a beautiful venue for concert!" Later, I would see the restories and found it excellent.

Earlier, I learned that the town's Nanong Buencamino recorded the choir music used in the Marlon Dino Abaya film "More Than" in this church and the award-winning film was actually shot on Bohol Bay.

Later, Montano also told me about the church's historic pipe organ, which was installed in the choir loft in 1824 and years have found itself in a state of disrepair.

Experts say the Baclayon pipe organ has the character of Spanish Baroque organs and its parts could make the sound of birds through the little pipes/flo pipes. It can also enhance melodies with the tinkling of the cymbales, an ornamental sang-sang bells on a velvet drum and campanillas.

Through the maintenance of Paloma Zobel de Ayala and the Ayala Foundation Inc., the organ's pipes, wind chests, manual keyboard, pedal and other accessories were repaired meticulously and restored to their original form.

Saturday morning last week, I saw Montano at the Tagbilaran airport and told him about the Baclayon concert, which would officially herald the reopening to life of the newly restored Baclayon pipe organ.

In the evening, I found myself on the church choir loft with Montano and wife Geraldine Tiru, watching a concert featuring composer-conductor Grimbal Hallfter and pianist Maria Manuela Cano on the pipe organ.

In the audience were Jaime Augusto Zobel, Sofia Zobel, Patricia Zobel and Ben Zobel Jr., who is behind a renewed restoration program involving Bohol's cultural heritage.

Solfeggio

Pianist Maria Manuela Cano opened the concert with Antonio de Cabezón's (1510-1566) Tiento del Primer Tono, followed by a Handel fugue and arranged by Ali Parsons.

As the Cano sans numbers unfolded, one realized the musical instrument was no fragile. It needed a focused assistant to keep it in tune and go through its complicated parts, like its ornamental stop and its number 2mg sound pipes/-used to create trembling sound similar to a drum.

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THE AUTHOR. Sunshine Cruz, Oscar Moreno, Cristobal Hoffner, Beatriz Saavedra, Zabel de Asida Jr., Alonso Hoffner and Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala

CONDUCTOR. Cristobal Hoffner and pianist Maria Manuela Cury inaugurate the restored Bertuyo pipe organ in a church concert on Dec. 4 in Bohol.

Cesar Montano and Ayalas toast Bohol heritage

From page E1

HOMTSMO. Montanos with Sunshine co-endorser Cristobal Hoffner.

Bach's Aria and the 7th Variation of the Goldberg Variations, had a fairly good reading, and I suppose this piece is better off played on the piano to preserve its original resources.

You got to finally hear the aura of the big wood pipes and the reed stops with Juan Bautista Cabanilles's "Batalla Imperial."

The piece is a musical replica of a military battle and was properly the most extrovert piece played on the program.

The evening was highlighted with Hoffner playing Christmas carols from different countries. He concluded with a contemporary piece that ended with the use of the organ's pipe-like whistle that sounded like birds, and we thought that was the most charming and compelling number from the concert.

The significance of this concert is that the Zobel family helped bring back to life the remaining musical symbol of the town's cultural heritage while also assisting the town embark on a massive restoration campaign to preserve its historical, cultural and natural sites, including local traditions in craftsmanship.

Late in the night after the concert, Lost School Cafe of Hans School, owner of Boracayan's Stanislo Garden Resort and Spa's former Montenan and company to a late night cup.

School, who is German, had very fabulous Lord Elephant at home, earlier showed us his Rizal collections in his organ room, including furniture from Heidelberg where Rizal stayed in Germany.

It was an uncanny coincidence Montano had played Rizal in Alvarez's "Rizal."

Montano connected before the night cap ended. "It would be nice to hear Gerlie Limcaoi play on Bohol's next year after this historic pipe organ concert in our historic town."

SEA ZOBEL Jr. with Lani and Hans School of the Peacock Garden Resort

Archdiocese of Manila holds Biblia Festival 2008

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA HAS launched a Biblia Festival 2008to raise awareness on the Bible and to encourage more people to read, know and understand the scriptures. The festival is being held at the Manila Cathedral.

On Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Philippines, the Archdiocese of Manila Biblical Association formally opened the Biblia Festival 2008 with a solemn candlelighting of the Bible World Exhibit, led by Bishop Antonio M. Tuzon, chair of the CBCP Commission on Biblical Apostolate; his executive director, Fr. Oscar Alzamora; and Fr. Tony Moreneyre, chair of the Archdiocese of Manila Biblical Apostolate.

This was followed by the "Voices at the Cathedral," a choral competition of choirs from the different schools in the Archdiocese. The choirs interpreted two songs, one of which was "Isa Pa Imagine," a composition of Fr. Carlo Magno Marcelo.

The schools which participated in the competition were Ms. Isabel College, Philippine Women's University Elementale, University of Asia and the Pacific, Far Eastern University, Lyceum of the Philippines, University of Makati, Adamson University, University of Santo Tomas (College of Architecture) and Polytechnic University of the Philippines (Sagong Hiraj Choir).

The Biblia festival continues with the celebrations in conjunction with the Simbang Gabi tradition of the local Church: Starting on Dec. 15 (anticipated Simbang Gabi), the Biblia Festival will hold a Holy Bible Quiz Bee and a 30-minute Bible lecture. Each night will have as guests 1,000 poor parish priests of the archdiocese's nine districts, who will be served dinner after the mass at 9 p.m.

Other features of the Biblia Festival 2008 are the Bible Singing of the Pabasa-del Gobernador Facade; the Food Display at the Palacio del Gobernador building; the exhibition of banners, Bayani Fund festival around Plaza Roma (brisk walkers) up to Aranque; Food and Gifts Sale; Bible Edition (Things you want to know about the Bible) at the Plaza Roma-Park Agrao area; until Christmas; Christmas Tree display ("Puno ng Pag-asa") at the side of the Manila Cathedral; Holy Family photo walks at the top of Ayuntamiento Walk along Solana, and Herlin Bonus at Plaza Roma on Dec. 25.

Visit www.bibliafestival.com.

Celebration of Mindanao theater

From page E1

2008" also featured the Mindanao theater congress, a slew of theater workshops, and a calendar of nationally performances in partner communities.

Disclosure: This writer served as executive director of the festival and wrote the play initially premiered on the festival's opening night.

This was Hesselberg's "Bulan ko Santos," a documentary theater piece about how the larger sociopolitical forces in society imprint on the crystal lamb-ground of family and home.

Starring four of the greatest actors in Cagayan de Oro today—Alfred Claro, Baby Pontillas, Alfred Calvadagan and Jay Bolivar—the play was directed by the legendary Audry-G. Iranon, who single-handedly established the tradition of the annual school play in Cagayan de Oro City.

Noah Nagaraja's evocative set of hybrid wire and millinery thumbprint, together with the documentary video clips, brought the audience to the chilling world of married love and the divorcecrisp.

"TODOS ko Santos." A play foregrounding the home as the crucial battleground of history, written by Mozart Pacairan (second from right) and directed by Anita Santos (second from left)

FESTIVITIES. Scene of Mindanao theater pains for a snapshot.

CHILD'S PLAY. Rania Martinez's "Dala Ta" makes a chilling look-at-war from the viewpoint of children.

Most powerful

The following night began with "Dala Ta" (Let's Play) of Ilaing Kalipapagunya from General Santos City. Written and directed by Rony Siervarz, who sits on the NCCA National Committee on Dramatic Arts, the multilingual piece started as child's play and ended up a horrific microcosm of the internecine wars in Mindanao that continue to play on.

I found this the most powerful offering of the festival.

This play was twin-billed by Ilaing Kalilikhasalan's "Si Jungo." Based on a Maguindanaon folktale about deception and forgiveness, the production used the talented Ilaing Kamboyan style of evocative ensemble performance, but with a twist—the many actors were giant masks. This allowed director Thelfith Mora a free hand in exploring large gestures and poses, and urban evoking comic in an over-the-top thing.

Ilaya theatergoers took note of a group of actors at stage right who hid their faces behind accordion fans—they turned out to be the lively actor-talents who provided the witty repartees and hilarious radio drama-style theatrics.

I must say that this was the production I most enjoyed during the festival.

Climbing the festival's gala offerings was Davao City-based Kalilasan's "Sabotan." A musical-theater piece based on a Bagobo myth, this Roxie Dandan masterpiece uses youth theater at its populist best. Closely, the juxtaposition of this emergent group to follow the above Collection.

Interspersed during the hectic schedules of the festival were experimental theater outings, such as that of Artistic Quarter of Bukidnon City. "Untitled" was a night of interspersed monologues all set around a negative lens. It juxtaposed theater and theatre, love and lust and leaving. I thought this was a work in progress that needed just a little more candle gone-working then was there before a much needed public presentation.

Contemporary dance

Capitol University's "Kindled at Tembo-ong ang Pasa'd Lamon si Ina"—written, composed, directed, and choreographed by Cyrell Allado—was a resurgence of all that the promising Allado has to offer.

Its program notes Nico Jimlin, president and artistic director of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, talking even after the performance was Ilaya ang Ignasyan's "Gumbawan Ang Pagbagod sa Isip" (Forget I Think I'm Flying), a non-verbal theater piece about drug addiction.

The group is actually a contemporary dance group with the large eye-winning the first prize in the annual NCCA-sponsored National Modern Dance Competition in Koronadal until they had to be moved to the Hall of Fame.

Their main choreographer is Roger Odron, an engineering graduate whose passion it really is the arts, but the group put their creative juices together for this fabulous physical theater extravaganza featuring five strong, four male and one female. And the result was a gripping, emotive offending one's expectabilities to take destiny by the hand and go with it.

But don't take my word for it: it wasn't this hard-good "mixed lemon" that made this piece so winners but the sweet-sweet choreography that keeps on surprising you till the end. As for the drummers, well, we can talk about it some other time.

Endre, too, to "Bulan ng Sabtan," a Chavacano drama about Christian-Muslim relations written by the venerable Bert Jerusa, was premiered to cultural-debate at the Western Mindanao State University in Zamboanga City, and Mandaluyong Bukidnon's "Bagalingan Ta Magsug" (Sweets of Lightning), a youth theater fusion explosion of spectacle and sounds under the artistic direction of Bai Ad Quezada.

"We are happy to host this festival," announced Dr. Mariano M. Lucis, president of Silliman University, whose Bukidnon Hall served as the main hub of the festival.

"Three years after we built this theater, the Mindanao theater Festival comes to town to perform on our stage. That is an affirmation that our community engagement through culture and the arts is on the right track."

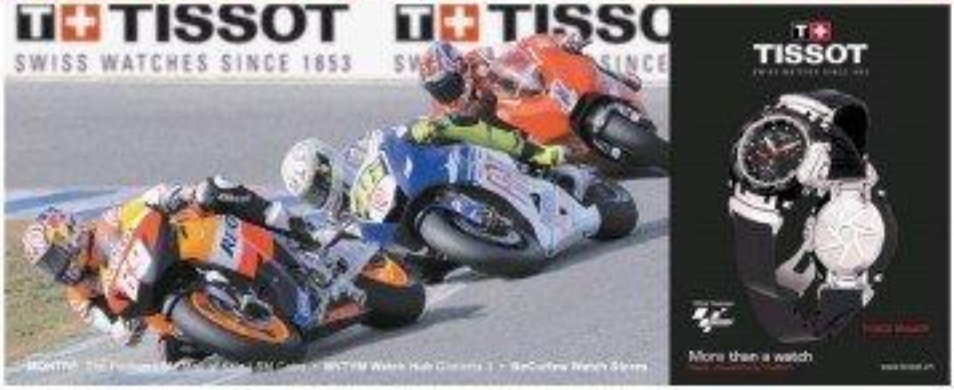
As Cagayan de Oro City Mayor Constantino Jaraula put it, "We are gathered in this festival to celebrate the multicultural conjunction of Mindanao, and what better place to celebrate it than in the city of golden friendship, where peace and progress are interlocked in our fruitful journeys toward unity in diversity."

E-mail the author at mrojas@yahoo.com

YOUNG BLOOD. The emerging new stars of Mindanao theater

THE CULTURAL network of Mindanao finally finds a home at Rodolfo Hall.

Time, stylish and joyous



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John Antonio Ortega stands next to an oval-type display module in his shop and begins to unravel delicately from the module an engagement ring revealing a flawless 2-carat, heart-shaped diamond for his client to marvel. "After watching last year's hit Blood Diamond', awareness is appreciation over the value of these little yet sparkling stones'—where they come from and to what extent they have gone to get to the right girl. Every one of these diamonds has its own unique story," he tells the couple. "Oh, and don't worry. Of course our diamonds are all 100-percent guaranteed conflict free." Being in the watch and jewelry field for already 30 years, Alexis Jewellers has definitely known the rules of this ever-changing and challenging retail game that has changed 100-fold from when it used to be.

The owner says that "most men don't know a thing about jewelry" quips John, to a murmur indeed. Being naked to run the day-to-day operations of Alexis, surely John may have a thing or two to say when it comes to finding that perfect jewelry piece for the perfect partner. "You can never underestimate men's quest for luxury" says John. And finding all these luxurious indulgences would all the more be simplified because of the extensive jewelry collection (rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, pendants, chained one and brooches through when shopping under the Alexis chain stores situated around the Metro. John, aside from managing the daily operations, also selects, sorts out and curates cutting-edge three karat-crafted jewelry to a jewelry.

As we deal with the never ending up-tick in oil, basic necessities as well as other precious commodities like gold, corn, rice and wheat worldwide, people have been more prudent in their daily expenses and would never remember a time would give them value for money for a reasonable investment. "With the value of gold increasing by the day since the start of 2009', people now realize that gold in itself is a good investment which may be less prone to fluctuations," quips John.

With these sets of events, here at Alexis clients can be sure that every handcrafted jewelry piece is definitely special. Through its hand-crafted 14K jewelry collection, Alexis is perfect itself in being the only few 18K jewelry outlet in the Metro that offers diverse quality products at reasonable prices. Making much purchase all the more attainable is the fact that only Alexis diners awards each of its quality chairs by offering an individual diamond certificate for every diamond-studded jewelry piece in its vast inventory. With this diamond certification, Alexis assures that every diamond has been reviewed, evaluated, measured, and scrutinized using trained eyes, a jeweler's loupe, a microscope, and other industry tools by a certified gemologist. A completed Alexis certificate would constantly include an analysis and graphical representation (when available) of the diamond's 4Cs which are namely its clarity color, symmetry, and carat weight.

With brand name watch lines such as Baume & Mercier, Corum, Gucci, Frederic Constant, Jacques Lemans Fl, Swiss Mountaineer, Charles Jourdan, Chronoforce, Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club, Arbutus, Heaven, ELLE, Caterpillar, Pedro, and various exclusively watch lines such as NBA and Ferrari-a-few, John thinks Alexis is equipped to challenge the other watch retailers around the Metro.

For a closer look at Alexis Jewellers Inc., visit its branches at Glorietta 1, Makati City (893-4750), SM Megamall (635-7050), SM North Edsa (927-8749), SM Shell at Aseana (556-0876), Robinsons Place Manila (522-7991), Robinsons Place Malvar Mall (367-1900) and at Robinsons, Makati (840-3258).

Combining aesthetics and functionality

The height of gypsies, psychedelic prints, and flared bottom jeans made the '70s a truly memorable era. It pushed fashion on the limits; hence, the most interesting style was created: a perfect moment for Guy Ancelin, a Frenchman responsible for a brand that spoke rebellion with every.

Chevignon commemorates American pilots at four-starred planes in bomber jackets, aptly led by Charles Chevignon. The essence of the brand represents the "American Dream" and its legend of building an original world based on its historical features.

Priding itself with larger-than-life adventure, Chevignon continues both aesthetics and functionality. From 1979 to 1987, the brand spread like wildfire and conquered New York, Tokyo, and Hong Kong, in addition to more than 20 countries throughout the world. From dreamway, Chevignon moved onto women's line, kids, and footwear. They also opened stores with bags and eyewear. But Chevignon are famously reinvented itself by "thinking out of the box".

The brand grew to be more competitive in 2006 as it had on its ruling Jean. Olivier Letard. Lenard was named artistic director in order to lead Chevignon look on its wrist the vintage look, which explains the current logo finish. This is accomplished by 55 shops in France and over 950 point of sale materials that covers at least 56 countries.

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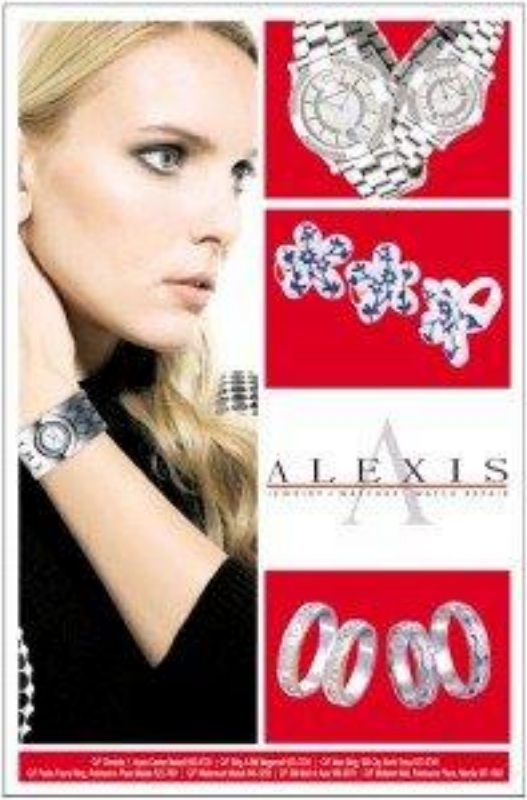

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NEW PLAY: 'Tudtud Alan's magical treatment of a Magindanaon folk tale about deception and redemption

Celebration of Mindanao theater

By Mozart Pastrana
Contributor

FROM AGUSAN TO ZAMBOANGA, they all came to Rodolfo Hall in Cagayan de Oro City for the recent Mindanao Theater Festival. And theatergoers all over the country had been stirred up and take note!

Some 30 thrilling original productions were presented during the four-day festival—from a neo-ethnic pop-rock dance theater musical about politics and the environment, to an intimate drama for around four ones on a singular bed, to an original drama, to your-face contemporary dramas written and performed in English.

Not to mention a gripping indigenous ritual by Subanon folk from Bagabag City and a riveting performance by indigenous youth from Bukidnon.

"We are very excited that this cultural event in Cagayan de Oro City, which brings together hundreds of active theater practitioners who represent more than three generations of cultural workers, artists and collectors, can bring us to a more deepened sense

CULTURAL THRUST: Mutamin M. Lucia, president of Liceo de Cagayan University, which hosted the Mindanao Theater Festival

join of our passion," said festival director Ateneo Bonifacio, executive director of Mindanao, the cultural network of Mindanao.

Funded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and managed by the Rodolfo Noel Pelaez (RNP) Foundation, in partnership with Mindanao and the City of Cagayan de Oro, the "Mindanao to Bilbao's Eye: The Mindanao Theater Festival

CELEBRATION E5

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ROUSING FINALE: UST Conservatory soloists let performing talents during the closing of the concert at the Santisimo Rosario Church.

It showcased the most promising talents and the most versatile batch coming from the UST Music Conservatory

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UST CHRISTMAS GALA

A concert like no other

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor
Photos by Ramón Hernández, Paul Oliveros, Lester Ledesma and Paul Allyson Quiambao

IF THERE WAS ONE thing remarkable about the 6th Christmas Gala Concert presented by University of Santo Tomas (UST) Thursday last week, it was the fact that it showcased the most promising talents and the most versatile batch coming from the UST Conservatory of Music.

The concert opened with Fr. Manuel Maximilian's arrangement of "Christmas Festival," deftly executed by the UST Brass Ensemble and the Percussion Ensemble.

"Christmas Collection"—conducted by Herminio Ramirez—led the Wind Orchestra under its youth conductor Michael Arcana rendering fresh readings of favorite Christmas carols.

As though these were not enough, the Symphonic Orchestra dished out more Christmas medleys featuring personable young soloists Marie Ann Rosal, now and Christine Paul Anthony Magtan. A medley directed to OPM songs featured the well-heeled Coco Tomentos and the Linaptikon Vocal Ensemble.

A superb arrangement of "Oh Holy Night" by Hanson saw three sopranos—Hosana Al Kanon, Thea Hyun and Naomi Dia Hanson—in their vocally glorious best.

Talented freshmen opening sets for the main part powerful, followed by Perez's enchanting interpretation that took the breath away. Afternoon's crowning glories made the Christmas carol more meaningful than it already was with a massive choir and 6-pieces orchestra.

A security member was a Techno Christmas with the UST Orchestra and Raul Sunico on the piano, and with the special participation of the Salingpusa Dance Troupe.

Hard to disabuse the power in us to be able to appreciate this number, which I knew was an effective bridge to the young audience sick and tired of Bach and Handel sermons during the holiday season.

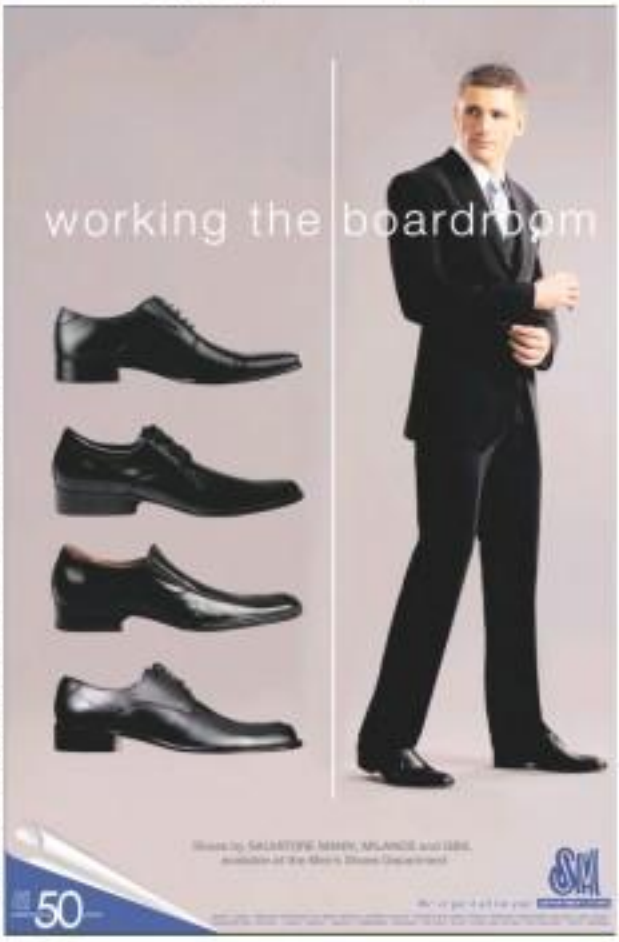
Centerpiece

The soaring and magnetic vocal leaps of Eugene de los Santos and Ronan Perez were the centerpiece of the Christmas Finale participated in by the Conservatory Chorus, the Grade School Choir and Pueblo-nos. Here, Ronan was in perfect soloist control of the various choirs and ensembles.

But the number that brought the house down was undoubtedly soprano Rachelle Geraldine's rendition of "Bonne Gesch" from Handel's "Messiah." Here was vocal coloring at its best—the most delicate trills matched by a crisp precision that all but dazzled the audience.

Of course, a pop spiritual song like "Light of a Million Mornings" is no match to Handel's "Messiah," but still Geraldine managed to give it a vocal flourish devoid of mawkish effects. This shakespeare-reading

A CONCERT 15



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A concert like no other

Turn to page F3

was, indeed, fast-paced.

It was the same piece that threw the Philharmonic Theater audiences in an uproar two years ago, when the song, it was an evening that belonged to tenor Daniel Dimaya and the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under Redel Calumpang, another outstanding product of the UST Conservatory.

The highly successful gala concert was co-chaired by Manuela Zobel and Fe Medel-Abaya. Of the concert, which will be aired on Christmas Eve on MBS-4, was actually a fundraising event for the benefit of UST's heritage conservation efforts and the scholarship fund of the UST Conservatory of Music.

Forefront

The Conservatory is one of the few music school schools with a school orchestra (UST Symphony), award-winning choirs (UST Singers and Core Tomasino) and the highest enrollment (800) among music schools in the country.

Conservatory Dean Eunice said, "The UST Conservatory has been at the forefront of musical performances in the country. It has also supplied many musicians in the various orchestras, classical and popular bands both here and abroad, and has had the services of some faculty members in other music schools."

Eunice, who took over as dean of the conservatory in February 2003, has conceived the music programs he inherited from dean Rebecca Pale (among them the "Asian-pang Mga Bata" piano concert and the annual music camp where both students and teachers reside and interact with music enthusiasts in the countryside).

Rebecca Pale and Eunice, other equally distinguished artists in previous years actually pioneered to make the music school what it is today—one of the best.

The music school was founded in 1946, opening with an inaugural concert announced by Fr. Benito Reginaldo Jacobo, OP, who noted that the occasion was the first time in the long educational history of the old-centennial institution that a school of music was established.

Initially, the music school was part of the College of Architecture and Fine Arts (Cafa). Its first director was one Manuel Casero who had a stint as a director of the UST-NCCC Band.

In the book "The University of Santo Tomas in the 20th Century," writer Josefina Lim Bo states: "Universally regarded as the founder of the Conservatory is Fr. Gregorio Garcia, OP, whose initiative and encouragement inspired the opening of the Conservatory."

The subsequent music head who enriched the school and gave it solid direction was flamboyant pianist Aida Escalona Ingalls, who relished for almost a decade.

In the league of legends were other equally distinguished mentors such as pianist and conductor Bernardino Custodio, cellist Antonio Molina, violinist Ramon Cuyan and, later—what UST piano teacher Julio Ann Sicangco described as the "genius of genius" Ignacio "Iggy" Gobaleng, Aida Sese Escalona, Alfredo Buenaventura de Guzman and Rosario Picazo, who is better known as the first teacher of Cecile Licad.

The first wave of divas who also taught at the school were Mercedes Matias-Santiago (the country's first Lucia di Lammermoor), Soledad Cendaña de Raluta, Soledad Oppen-Sagaral, among others. The later batch included Irma Pe Benedicto, Gloria Diaza Gerard, Rolinda Inocencio-Arriola.

After the botched pianist Reynaldo Reyes came a later generation of pianists that included Corazon Fluerle Rabuyo, Marina Fernandez and Gloria Luisa Lopez Sta.

Other notable teachers in the Conservatory include violinist-conductor Sergio Escalona, soprano Carolina Bene, violist Irene Lim-Lhuer, bassist Jesus Jose Ejarque and Fely Lasarte, who starred in the concert "Song of Sto. Tomas," which was filmed on the UST campus in 1956.

New threat

What is the new threat of the Conservatory now after the reign of Tupas, Pabros, Pale and Alexander Aming?

Said Eunice: "The UST Conservatory strives to be globally competitive, especially in the field of performance and new programs offerings such as jazz studies, music technology and specialized theater. Research, composition and pedagogy are also under components of its thrust. Through the encouragement of artistic fit, the Symphonic Orchestra, Symphony Band, jazz band, the choruses as well as individual soloists from both the faculty and student sectors, the Conservatory has played a major role in many of the country's classical presentations and activities, as well as a number of international events in Singapore, China, Taiwan and Thailand. It has also established linkages with a number of foreign institutions, such as the Elizabeth University of Music (Hiroshima, Japan), Pfeiffer University (South Carolina, USA), and the Linz Academy of Music (Vienna, Germany)."

"The actual raison d'etre of a music graduate—from pre-college to become a concert performer, teacher or researcher." "Now, music has become an industry, expanding to other choices of genres such as pop, rock and jazz, choral and band conducting. There is also the extensive career choices such as music therapy (with Nursing), music technology (with Computer Technology), music theater (with Drama Department) the music (with Movie Industry)."

Focused

The music head notes that the typical Conservatory student core is more academically focused and expected to excel not only in his field of specialization but also in other subjects.

Explained Eunice, "The Conservatory trains students in the classical vein, but this training can be adapted later for those who want to venture into other musical genres such as pop, rock and jazz. As a result, the quality of our graduates is generally high. This is supported by the fact that most of the graduates are now employed. Many Education graduates do not find it difficult to be hired by private and public schools such as La Salle Zobel, St. Paul, St. Joseph, Assumption.

"Other performing majors, if not on a concert career—artists is extremely difficult and takes time—either pursue graduate studies or play in symphonic or commercial ensembles. On the other hand, the UST Conservatory of Music is leading the way in terms of how composers being offered, including Jose Maceda which is being offered now, and Hasp which was recently acquired. Fostering music's potential for globalization, we aim to further hamper the playing and vocal skills of our students so that they will turn out more globally competitive and globally recognized."

CAST OF THOUSANDS. UST performing arts talents, including tenors Eugene de los Santos and Ronan Perez; Conservatory Chorus; and Professor of the Central Seminary perform "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

STRING section of the Symphony Orchestra

WIND Orchestra performs percussion corps

SECRETARY GENERAL Fr. Isidro Rivera, OP welcomes VIP guests

DIAMOND Mariela Zobel, co-chair of the 2008 UST Christmas Gala Concert

SOPRANO Rachelle Gonzales performs Handel's "Rejoice Greatly."

CONSERVATORY dean Ruel Santos in action

SOPRANOS Honor Espino, Tina Perez and Noemi Cruz perform "O Holy Night."

VIDEO wall shows Gerodias' powerful singing

CONDUCTOR Armangkit Reyes

CHAIR Soloist Choir

A triad of concert pianists

By Rosario Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

QUESTION, MAESTRO: WHAT is the difference between European-trained music and Philippine-trained music?

"European music is more disciplined," says concert pianist Abelardo Gabriel. "And Philippine music has more soul, more emotion. So of course it would be different interpreting the music."

Gabriel spoke to reporters previous to his recital at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) to announce the concert "Three Grand: A Piano Celebration" with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) under Gleen Rebolo. The "three grand" title refers to the three concert pianists who will be featured: Gabriel himself, José Activin Panganiban III and Ria Rilles Balatbat.

The program was held way ahead of the concert—scheduled on Jan. 9, 8 p.m. at the CCP—because Pangan-ban, who is based in New York, is on vacation abroad.

"This is the first time three pianists will be performing with the PPO," said CCP president Bernie S. Jordan. "They will be performing some of the great classics as well as Filipino works." The repertoire includes a season by Fryderyk Chopin and Franz Liszt with songs arranged in a classical style.

The three pianists are armed with impressive credentials. Pangan-ban, for one, won a prominent honors student at the Ateneo de Manila and the UP College of Music, won an award at an international piano competition in Japan, pursued further studies in Germany and later pursued three degrees (including a Ph.D.) in engineering-economic systems & operations research from Stanford University, USA. He is now a vice president at Citigroup, New York.

Gabriel has studied up a dozen of degrees in music from the Philippines (UP), Japan, Belgium and Germany. He opened the International Concert Series in Hannover, Germany last year and has recorded the works of Silvestrom and Chopin in Germany. A second recording in Germany is a collection of Philippine art songs ("Excellent") with tenor Isaac Gonzalez Jones, and recently arranged by composer Ryan Cayabyab.

A homegrown talent, Dilco Balatbat was a child prodigy who as incredible member of the National Music Competition for Young Artists (Banyuls) at the age of six, and came dragging back five years later to win first prize in the prestigious competition. She won more recent fame in piano competitions, has performed as featured soloist and collaborating artist in many recitals and concerts, and is now an assistant professor at the UP College of Music (where she graduated Magna cum Laude).

During the premiere, the three pianists gave a solo sample of their musical wares, performing with intensity as well as keenness of expression and sensitivity. Chopin's Ballade No. 4 (Balatbat); Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat Minor (Pangan-ban); and Herbert's "Serenade," as arranged by Liszt (Gabriel).

"Each of us has his own style," said Gabriel, referring to their playing during rehearsals. "So we will just have to meld the three into one style."

Memoirs of a grand dame

By Amado Mo. Guevara
Contributor

THE SCHEIL BUSTEA C. Coquia is an writers, author, educator, singer, director, and other things as well. In her senior years, the concert pianist has turned "from the hand I was to serve, to thrift and to do for if need be."

In country where the capacity to be used to antiques, that is truly a heartening statement. Now she has come up with her memoirs, "Shuttling Through Stage and Screen" (FEU Publications, 2008). And the book a great reading.

Dr. Coquia was born in Naga, Bikicol, in the year 19... (commencement). In grade school, she became a church soloist. Her destiny was not sought or modeled, it came to her "like a flash of light in the middle of the night..." Dreams and siblings were all musically inclined.

At an early age, Beatrix was exposed to the business of arts. Her father, Leon Acol, was portrayed by the Japanese military during WWII, and she witnessed the public executions of the uncle of a friend.

War brought to the fore her courage and patriotism. In 1951, during the Korean War, she was one of the Filipinas artists who believed to the Kwashiorkor—with a record of achievers—to sing for our troops. In gratitude, a full—"Puente Bill" was named after her.

Singing was for Beatrix's first love. In the late 1940's, she and Lolly Lisson would sing over DZRH, and on records. There were no talent fees and no talent coordinators there, and they would be paid in coated goods, cigarettes and sweets. But it seems, there was a saving courtesy on them.

One executive of a recording company asked the comely Miss Coquia for a screen date. When she declined, her record "was promptly pushed." (Note: no one was for divorcing and interrupted tape "in the vicinity of Steinhaque" by a popular "band/orchestra leader.")

Blissfully, she was able to live, circle other around like a prominent and find refuge in the attentive of one Boyd, a fun-complexioned teacher to one of the schools in Davao City.

The experience was traumatic, and left her with "unpleasant feelings about men, now liking them, now afraid of them." Is this the reason why she has not married?

After graduating with honors from the Philippine School of Commerce (now PEU) and the Maxwell L. Quezon Memorial Institution (now MLQU), she had intended to be a singing lawyer-singing, to express herself and forgiving to defend the downtrodden.

But it was not to be.

From 1953 up, she became embroiled in a myriad of activities, many of which last to this day: singing, acting, directing, teaching, writing, attending conferences, moderating, adopting plays, raising funds, organizing diverse guilds, speech clubs and summer workshops, delivering papers, etc.

In retirement, Ex Nardo, 70, maintains a busy schedule and a positive attitude. Media her accomplishments are nothing short of awesome.

McDonald's McDonald's Cotabato City: 365 and still counting!

The McDonald's family welcomed its 365th store in Cotabato City when its doors officially opened to the public last December 8. This marks yet another milestone for McDonald's as they continue to reach new places with the desire to provide more Filipinos convenient with high quality food and service.

Situated in the heart of the city, amidst the hustle and bustle of its commercial district, McDonald's Cotabato made a big bang and will definitely be a landmark in this progressive city.

McDonald's Cotabato is the first McDonald's store in the city standing two stories high with a second floor outdoor dining area. It is also complete with a fun-filled, play area area to accommodate 80 people.

Customers were treated to two days of festivities celebrating the grand opening. Last December 7, the ribbon cutting and short blessing ceremony was capped off with a fireworks display that brightened up the night sky and broke the delight of many spectators.

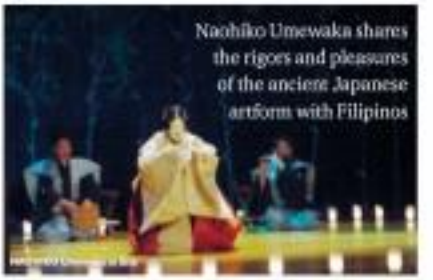
The fun continued as early the next day with a McDonald's marmalade that toured the city to invite different customers and prepared for the impression of customers like a Mega Bonanza for the adults and a Ronald McDonald Show that was a great fun with the kids and the young at heart.

Not to be left behind, actor McDonaldland character, Ronald and Grimace did not miss the event and entertained the guests by posing for photos and giving cries of freshness.

McDonald's Cotabato City is the perfect place to have great tasting, affordable food while having fun in this same store—perfect for the best venue for special occasions and for hanging out with family and friends.

McDonald's President and CEO, Mr. Kenneth Yang graced the special occasion. He was joined by the Honorable Mayor of Cotabato City, Muslimin Sema, Franchise Owner Mr. Oscar Yao-Yang and Managing Director of McDonald's Cotabato City, Benjo Yao-Ming.

Aside from McDonald's Cotabato City, McDonald's opened 18 other new stores all over the country in 2008 alone. Metro Manila: Fairview Cubao, Fuentes Pardo, Gateway Mall, Agora Pumpkin Sea Juice, Tayuman Center, E-Comm, SM Marikina, Robinsons Malolos, Victory Mall, Lanang, C3 Barangka, McArthur Pinlac, Subase, Tuason Jose Bello, Ayala IT Cebu, Tabunok Cebu, Digos City, Mindanao: Shoppers Gaisbranga, Digos, Davao.



Naohiko Umewaka shares the rigors and pleasures of the ancient Japanese artform with Filipinos

Meet Dr. Noh

By Sofia Guillermo
Contributor

FAMOUS FOR ITS OPULENT YET AUSTERE style, Noh theater is one of Japan's most revered art forms and is the oldest existing staged performance art. Its history dates back to the 14th century Muromachi Period, which also saw the birth of what are now considered to be the quintessential expressions of Japanese culture: the tea ceremony and flower arrangement.

In 2001, Noh was declared by Unesco as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Interestingly, Noh with its viewpoint as an ensemble work is not enhanced by its practitioners' together. The musicians practice individually, the same with the actor (lead performer) and supporting actors.

This is due to the aesthetic philosophy of ichi-go, ichi-e ("one moment, one opportunity") to which each performance is a celebration of impossibly 20's a jazz session by seasoned artists.

Under the auspices of the University of the Philippines Center for International Studies (Upcis) the chance for Filipinos to have "one encounter, one opportunity" with a Noh master has been made possible.

NAOHIKO Umewaka in "The Indian Beekeeper"

Partnership

Naohiko Umewaka, Ph.D., a Kokugakuin Noh Master for Shite Ryu, Reisen school, who gave his first performance at age three under the tutelage of his father, the legendary Naoyoshi Umewaka, and whose lineage goes back 600 years is as long as the history of Noh itself, has wanted to share his art with Filipinos since 2000.

In previous visits with Assistant Adeline C. Umali of Upcis, Umewaka invited his first set of Pilipino students, a venture which produced impressive results. The following year, three more students performed a full-length play, "Hikita," with other Noh masters at NCBC Nasugbu in celebration of the 50th year of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines.

Noh training has been a long-term and continuing program since undertaken by Umewaka and Umali for Upcis.

Now in the Philippines for a month with an appointment as Special Advisor for Cultural Exchange by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan, Umewaka has been conducting Noh lessons, demonstrations and workshops open to interested students and teachers at UP Diliman, Cojuangco de Oro and Hapi City.

Asked how he can teach so many interested students in one small classroom, he says the crux-piece of Noh is in the mind. Or that it can be so with practice. "The more you are disadvantaged, you could be better using this disadvantage."

Solid tradition

Despite having six centuries of solid tradition behind him, Umewaka is not content with merely duplicating the tried and tested formulae of his art. While retaining the language of Noh, he has also been writing and performing in new works, which he has called "modern plays and newly created Noh productions"—proof that the art, though ancient, is dynamic and reflective of its context.

His 2000 production of "Hikita"/"Ang Sinkhildkay at Ang Isang Noh na Lupain" is one example. "Hikita," considered to be the centerpiece of classical Noh repertoire, is the most ancient of his plays, while Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio's adaptation of the story of Dan-ozo to Pikal's ang is character from "Wali Mo Tangero" offering Noh connections.

An original work by Umewaka, "The Coffee Shop within the Play," written in 2003 and an official entry to the Tanabe Olympics of the Nineties performed at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 2000, also to unravel the Noh's to create what might be called a meta-Noh.

"The Hidden Restaurant," written in 1997, is a psychological play that borrows from Noh and requires its main characters to perform such a Noh mask. After watching the play, Monsour G. Tongson, playwright and theater scholar, remarked that it was a "tragedy-fantasy."

Umewaka's experiments have been very well-received, although there is the inevitable resistance from the occasional purist. "The work of tradition] encourage pursuit its own deserving challenges to an increasingly globalized and culturally homogenized world, there are fewer and fewer opportunities to be exposed to the authentic or [to genuinely Pertorming] manifestations.

Umewaka's highly-participatory program involves the multiple aspects of lectures, demonstrations and workshops, as well as colloquia and performances, carefully conceptualized, organized and choreographed by its creator who calls "a complete experience."

Old teachers

Teaching Instigator is not new to the Umewaka family. Umewaka's great grandfather, Minoru Umewaka (1828-1909), was credited with reviving the art-form during the upheavals of the Meiji Restoration, when Noh temporarily lost favor with the general public in the mad rush toward modernization.

It was also largely through Minoru's influence that Noh reached the West, one of his more famous students being Ernest Fenollosa and, by extension, Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats. This confluence of innovation and opening up of what seems to be a confined world accessible only to the initiate is being continued by Umewaka today.

Umewaka says Filipinos have an innate receptivity to the art, which makes it a pleasure to teach. In fact, some of his students have become capable Noh practitioners in their own right.

These 25 students—Rona Ty, Che Ramos and Jessa Hidalgo—may even be said to have made Noh history by being the first women—and non-Japanese at that—to play traditionally male roles, playing Noh top drum, and wearing the part of Tsukiwa and Okina, respectively.

Introducing the world to Noh is an ambitious undertaking, but Umewaka makes it seem almost effortless. For him, all the world can be a Noh stage.

Mother and Child exhibit

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSFUL "110 Shades/110 Years" exhibit, the UP Gen-eralist lecture with the UP Alumni Association will hold another exhibit to commemorate with the centennial of the University of the Philippines starting Dec. 16 at the Teodo Hall, 2/L, Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Quezon City.

The show will consist of Mother and Child pieces from the UP Centennial Artists, composed of university alumni artists and College of Fine Arts faculty and students. It will include works by National Artists José Joya and BenCab, and renowned practitioners Cheche Dans, Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi, Romy Mesmoguil and Junice Poong.

BY ROMY Mesmoguil

Artist talks on stand in the same venue in January. The discussions will focus on the Mother and Child as a recurring theme in art.

LIFESTYLE Arts&Books

Robots in foldabots

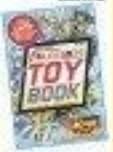
REVIEW

By Mimi Bas-Soriano-Cruz

IS THIS a book (Foldabots Toy Book, Volume 1, Imanind, 2008) or is it a toy? Does the creator Jennifer Tejido pause these questions for us—bright students of all ages. Does it really matter, when the whole idea of foldabots is bound to be thrilling and absorbing to our inborn creative proclivities? It is a few pages into this collection of card-board robots that you can be cut and built through folding a dedicated, 3D, they will travel on our shelves and make glue—the instructions are simple and easy enough to this level (unaided) order to build.

This concept is a novel one in local publishing, and not only because of the coated glossy paper used, the better for the robots and their metallic-sheen colors to be extra alive in full color. The special bonus is the robot mythology of Tejido's cast of 12 characters. (Dig these names and their corporations!)

Robots Philippines Incorporated, the pool of the robot-related Art Connection Inc is a matter of social consciousness and turns into a mechanical Philippines eagle in the mountainous mode. Pampa Philippines Incorporated, Kamakiki Manufacturing Inc. specializes in tedious camouflage to scan and blend with the environment. Ang Philippines Group Incorporated is propelled by racing turbo dynamos and can weave through heavy traffic without dislodging its rides. Kuala Philippines Incorporated is an excellent spy machine because it can become invisible in stationary hovering mode. Also Philippines Incorporated has two heavy-duty robots with tremendous powers, but together they can save worlds. And Ben Bravo are loyal Philippines Incorporated.



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MIND MACHINE — BY MARK ARIOLA

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Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — By Dave Green

		9	7	4	5		8	
						7		9
6		7			9		2	
3				1		9		7
9			5		7			3
8		4		9				1
	2		8			4		5
1		3						
	9		2	7	6	1		

Puzzles by Conceptis

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

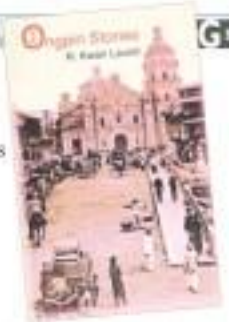
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at: www.sudoku.com

ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

1	5	2	3	7	4	6	8	9
7	8	6	9	5	2	3	1	4
4	9	3	6	8	1	7	5	2
6	3	8	4	1	5	9	2	7
5	2	1	7	9	8	4	6	3
9	4	7	1	2	3	5	9	8
8	6	5	2	3	9	1	4	6
2	7	4	5	6	1	8	3	5
3	1	9	8	4	7	2	5	1

Man of the street

By Raoul S. Dc Vera



Ongpin comes vividly alive in R. Kwan Laurel's sublime collection of stories

TO MANY, ONGPIN IS not so much a geographical reference as it is a state of being, synonymous for being Chinese in the Philippines. Two kilometers in length and named after businessman Ramon Ongpin, the street lies at the figurative heart of Chinatown.

It is this heart that is coaxed and prodded by R. Kwan Laurel in "Ongpin Stories" (Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran, Inc., Manila, 2008, 332 pages), a slim volume with eight short stories that work together like side streets branching off a main street.

True to its title, "Ongpin Stories" dwells with the experience of growing up Chinese-Filipino through the eyes of its young narrator, who is hilting Mandarin but growing English easily in the first story "Ongpin," reckons more the boy and learns what he is and is not, reflected in the people closest to him: four Bucket Mouth, rebellious pigtailed, Puffer and old-fashioned Grandfather. We discover why the boy finds solace in the movie theater; "I also enjoyed the air-conditioning and the dark because I felt safe from the people of Ongpin."

To who are the people in his neighborhood? Each story introduces readers to a character so authentic, they will feel "Ongpin veterans" must be autobiographical. "Sir Jack" is the maverick landlord caught in the middle of conflicting attitudes, "Queen of Gold" is urban librarian, the mailman who somehow stumbles his way into history and the quintessential corrupt politician, Captain Gozo, who added to every "a" in his surname for unnecessary grand purposes. "The Ninth Serpent" shows that the narrator is not the only person seeking to desperately pull free from Ongpin's orbit.

The surprising "The Most Honest Man in the World" is a nuanced look at prejudices and stereotypes, even as the bright-souls "Edsel Go" demonstrates what lies at the darkest ends of the same street through the unromanticized examples of the hill-tribesmen and the street.

But it is in the magnificent "Amok" that "Ongpin Stories" proves that just how gifted a fictionist Laurel is. A tale of unexpected romance and overriding to between, "Amok!" is one of Ongpin's most sung and self-fulfilling prophesy. It exemplifies the book's beguiling contradictions: fiction proving as unpredictable—and as real—as real life.

In that story, Laurel lays bare the dawning contradictions between unrelated tradition and hard-earned reality, such as his discussion on bound love: "They grow elevated like a fad, and never did I think that they looked beautiful. They are painful, and make such little steps and always they lead nowhere."

So it goes with names like Uncle Inglito, Tree Ice, mysterious herbal tutor and the line that divides Chinese from Filipino. Laurel observes the complicated reality of each character, often taken for granted, to the confusion of the protagonist's struggle to come to terms with his identity. And as the first story was essentially an introduction, the final story, "My Father's Secret," is the pinnacle epilogue, a soulful and prose that flows with deepening illumination.

All throughout, the prose shines through restrained and resonant lines. Laurel's words are filling in their precision, like the sound of perfectly tuned Chinese wind chimes. It's the sound of endless flights and terrible homecomings, both actual and imagined, with home being the Middle Kingdom or Ongpin. "I just love to make it," a friend tells our narrator. "I have to get out of here."

Not only is "Ongpin Stories" a welcome addition to the accomplished oeuvre of one of the country's most exciting writers, but it is an unforgettable experience by Gushcon Ong and others, but it is an intelligently elegant collection, to consider it all.

12 days of Christmas at makro

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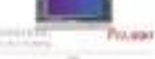
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Great reads

PARENTS WITH PICKY eaters, dieting teens an overweight child, or simply those who want healthier meals will appreciate "Healthy Eating for Kids: Over 300 Meal Ideas, Recipes and Tips for Eating Tips for Children," a paperback by Anita Bean. The second edition of the bestseller is packed with essential tips and up-to-date advice for no-hustle meals, quick snacks and lunch boxes, plus bonus new color photographs of the recipes.

A shopaholic's dream guide, Suzy Gershman's "Where to Buy the Best of Everything," is a compilation of her favorite stores, brands, and websites from around the world, all filled into one handy reference.

Get inspired to improve your home with "Home Design Ideas," by Caroline Clifton-Mogg. The guide's cover shots and close photographs and expert advice will help you to create a beautiful home, whether you have the small set of funds to spend more or a vast warehouse.

Makeup goddess will love "Steal: Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me" by Paula Begoun, a well-regarded authority on helping women find products that make them look and the distinctive expert-reasons of their upbringing.

In the South Central Mall, one thriller from Steve Berry, "Charlemagne Pursuit," the hero embarks on a dangerous quest where he will finally confront the shocking truth about his father's death, and the darkest possibilities of his own.

Foodies and connoisseurs will treasure "Baltimore's Gastronomic Culture," featuring Glenda Barrett, Conrad Caldwell, Margarite Fleming, Elyssa Inglis-Arkell, Jessie Janeiro, and Claude Tayag. The volume features Baltimore's team of six chefs who will have made a mark on Filipino cuisine, distilling the complexities of Filipino cooking from the huge diversity of regional and individual practices. The result is a veritable guidebook that brings gourmet understanding of our cuisine and inspiring more careful attention to good cooking practices.

"Be Ready Or!" Inspiring Volunteer Heroes by Hanah Ong Manila Boundaries Inc. lets you in a wealth of anecdotal stories on volunteerism experiences by coordinator Thelma Ty, Marc Nelson, Karen Estella, Margie Hilarao, Randy Bautista-Bet, John Silva, Cris Villanueva, Carlos Celdran, Denise Cua, and Ginny de Guzman. Edited by Gemma P. Montecillo, the collection also features Lourdes Dela Cruz, Susanne Glory Domingo, Rhail Gabaq, Lui Hermoso, Nathaniel Rivadeo, Ester Ibarra, Butch Jimenez, Ivan Libot, Pipi Lozano, Marilyn Go Sherwoodlan C. Tayngcoco and Fernando Vilog.

The books are available at Powerbooks at Greenbelt 3, 750-6429 ext. 8, Megamall, 6352696 ext. 8, Alabang Town Center, 8505642 ext. 8, Glorietta 3, 750-7555, Shangri-La, 6806234 ext. 25, Robinson's Place Ermita, 567-1931, Mall of Asia, 556-3446, Festival Supermall, 8908221, Robinsons, 641-1761-62, and Sta. Cruz, 733-2889/840 ext. 8.

2009 calendars

KEEP TRACK OF special dates and occasions with the new specialty 2009 calendars that are now available at National Book Store. Wall calendars, table calendars and desk calendars come in more than 100 picture-perfect designs and formats.

Animal lovers can choose from cats, dogs, horses, butterflies and other adorable pet-friends. Art-lovers and disambiguous will appreciate the breathtaking photography from Paris, Cape Town, South Africa, Italy and many other exotic locales.

Van Gogh, Monet, Impressionist art and Art Nouveau will inspire painting enthusiasts.

Offline calendars feature inspirational bible verses, angels and cupids, superbikes, race cars, foxy desi chanmate, chequins, sun-sets and garden remedies.

Also on sale are special gift sets. Each comes with a 12x12-inch wall calendar and a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle, magnet set, or four note cards—all with the same superior imagery from the calendar collection.

Available at all National Book Store branches nationwide.

BOOKSTORE CLEARANCE SALE

National Book Store is holding its Christmas Clearance Sale at the Makro/Market! Market! Premium Pre-week will go to the NBS Foundation that promotes the literacy of poor children from underprivileged communities.

Robots in foldabots

From page 1

Kilay Filipino (to sparkle), term Movement (no translation needed for this one!).

And who is the principal fan of the foldabots? A villain named Lu-Shu, who is fashioned out of the flesh and/or perhaps bony and pulverants. On his face with six eyes and three noses is a puzzle that the foldabots have to crack as part of their supply.

The adventure happens in the Philippines, Arcadia (home when technology grows) preserve the environment. The foldabots are discovered and become allies of good school students—Cathy, the strategist, Eliza, the artist, and Boyo, the navigator.

This is not the initial debut to print for Tolentino's robots, having been previously featured in the children's magazine, K-Zone. They popularity prompted the artist to give them a new life through more detailed and sophisticated rendering and the rationale on more rigid storyboard.

As this appears to be a pilot run of a series, perhaps the subsequent ones can incorporate a few catchier words and/or phrases and narrations closer to the particular storyboard figure to be assembled. That is a comment from twelve-year old boy Jonard, who loves such art activity books. It must be a question of economics that the present layout is the way it is.

Tolentino is an architect by profession and like his robots, he has touches in his pictures into an artist, a painter, a paper engineer, and a writer. He has illustrated about 25 children's books and has written other activity books for children, among them a alphabet pop-up and a do-it-yourself pop-up.

Yet, it is a book, also a toy and a game that includes 14 different playing cards. And all homegrown, too.

Companion books

Three companion books (The World Around Me: Ang Aking Daigdig, Adarna House, 2008), on thick cardboard printed a beginning vocabulary of 14 words per book.

Also a first in local publishing where we often lament that the books are hardly child-proof, these books are sturdy and meant for toddlers to hold and carry and spend hours poring over. They come ready for much wear and tear from 1 to 3 year-olds.

And don't worry about the words with the ending little girl on the cover (and even worse) being gender-specific. It's far from that. It is a clever ploy to lure both genders. The words chosen for each book line up to the title, as the objects do belong to the boy and the girl's immediate environment, but are exclusively so.

There are books on many words that matter to them: The girl's book (and cover) has words like wife, fruit, flowers, blender. The boy's book (green cover) has socks, airplane, ball or speed.

The books with their attractive colored photographs also answer the need of Filipino parents residing abroad who frequently are in search of old books of English-Tagalog dictionaries for their children and grandchildren.

The author is a member of the Philippine Board on Books for Young People and may be reached at rsvera@gmail.com.

2.5 million entries join wild hunt for Guyito

By Erika Sauler

AN AVALANCHE OF SOME 2.5 million entries poured in for the Inquirer's 22nd Guyito Wild Hunt grand raffle draw, which coincided with the paper's 22nd anniversary celebration on Dec. 5.

The figure, according to Inquirer senior vice president for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso, was more than double the 1.2 million entries that swamped the previous grand draw held in 2004. Reinoso noted that most of the participants this year came from Metro Manila.

"It's up to here: not the number of entries, it shows that the Inquirer has a very strong readership base," Reinoso said.

The Inquirer gave away two Discovery home gift checks and 20 Samsung components for the first draw, while two Discovery home gift checks and 20 Samsung mobile phones were given in the second draw.

For the final draw, two Discovery mobile packages at Discovery Shores for two and 20 22-inch Samsung LCD television sets were given away to lucky participants.

Assistant vice president for marketing Joyce Advincula said, "The Guyito Wild Hunt Draw 2 is our way of thanking our loyal readers for supporting us in the past 22 years, and helping us make the Inquirer the No. 1 newspaper in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao."

For the contest, the Inquirer partnered with Samsung and Discovery Suites for the prizes. Deep off-peak for the entries were provided by Cebuana Lhuillier, Double Dragon and 365 Express.

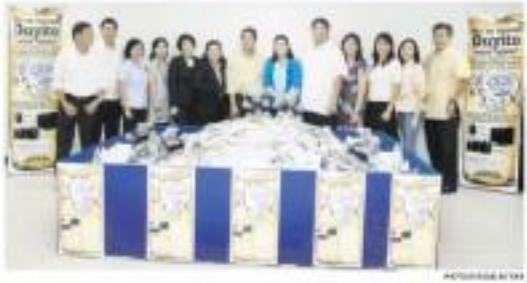
Joyce Raymond Lacson, marketing communications manager of Samsung, said the line-up has been beneficial. "We have a long-term partnership with the Inquirer and we target the same market so it was really easy to forge a partnership, especially since the Inquirer is a prestigious media institution."

On the other hand, Gemma Bolivar, Discovery Shores' group director of marketing communications said, "Guyito represents fun and the winner of the vacation package can expect pampering that only Discovery can give."

"Our very wide network is what we brought to this partnership," said Hans Sy Aycoy, corporate planning head of JG Summit Group of Companies. "In turn, it brought people to our branches."

Cebuana Lhuillier has 900 shops; Double Dragon has 150 outlets while 365 Express has more than 200 branches nationwide.

Advincula said, "The Inquirer would like to extend its appreciation to the sponsors and readers for making Guyito Wild Hunt a success."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC

HUNTED AND FOUND: Present during the grand draw Dec. 5 were (from left) Felipe Gloria, VP for advertising; Rene Reinoso, SVP for sales and marketing; Joan Salazar of the Department of Trade and Industry; Dong Takacol of Double Dragon; Frances Mariquit and Gemma Bolivar of Discovery Shores; Joyce Raymond Lacson of Samsung; INQUIRER president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez; Aaron Africa, Melvin Aering and Elmer Mar Evarola of Cebuana Lhuillier; AVP for marketing Joyce Advincula; and AVP for circulation Simon Yap.

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"For us to have met this number of entries, it shows that the Inquirer has a very strong readership base'–Inquirer SVP Rene Reinoso

Complete list of winners

First Draw (October 16)
1. Leonida F. Mendoza
2. Irene O. Eusebio
3. Edel Go
4. James P. Castillanes
5. Aurelio Isaac
6. Cha Fuentes Pino
7. Ricky Estabillo
8. Wayne G. Marcelino
9. Edgar Allan Pedasi
10. Dr. Rogelio D.
11. Flordeliza S. Domingo
12. Hilton L. Bartolfino

Second draw winners (November 18)
1. Hilda Rosas
2. Axel Uy Acajan
3. Marissa S. Rondon
4. Nelson H. Rubio
5. Joselito M. Lozano
6. Ma. Pamelyn S. Ongsiu
7. Rosco Del Rosario
8. Margaret Yu
9. Gerry A. Garcia
10. Eduardo Ochoa
11. Jenna Erika Rabella
12. Lorenzo E. Gatus
13. Jenny F. Fabroan
14. Mark Jessie L. Ulit
15. Victor Cuyos
16. Eric C. Flores
17. Ms. Ana B. Nolan
18. Cornelio G. Rebeso
19. Myrna L. Ilgo
20. Joan Kristel M. Villareta
21. Jesus R. Jerusalik
22. Rosario S. Cesario

Grand Draw winners (December 9)
1. Conchita Lim
2. Arthur Boquer
3. Myra Castell
4. Josefina Matunga
5. Ronilo Sara Galamaso
6. Democrito Maninton
7. Marielo Gapuzan
8. Eliza Loyao
9. Celia Lhuillier
10. Merlon Diaz
11. Nicko Michael Gilos
12. Manuel Rao

Editor Ernesto G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

A Pinay lead star in HK Disney

By Oliver H. Palumbo Jr
Contributor

"HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL" HAS evolved for an Asian crowd at Hong Kong Disneyland, where Filipina Kaddi Tesalero sings and dances daily as the female lead.

The 21-year-old previously performed in Manila productions of Disney musicals.

"High School Musical: Live!" is an interactive, 30-minute outdoor show staged on a runway set that recreates Main Street, U.S.A. a day.

Kaddi spoke about her Disney-themed experience in a recent e-mail interview with Inquirer Entertainment.

How similar to Vanessa Hudgens' performance do you have to make yours?

You introduced as Kaddi, the female lead singer, so there's no need to make the performance similar to Vanessa Hudgens' portrayal of Gabriella.

Before "HSM," what other shows have you done?

It's my first time at Disney Aside from "HSM," I'm also the Tatiana Singer in "The Golden Mistress."

Before Hong Kong Disneyland, I was an actor in musicals in the Philippines. I was in "Fist Notes," "Disney's Cinderella," "Disney's High School Musical Onstage," and "Disney's Aladdin Jr."

How does it feel to regularly play a Disney character?

It is overwhelming, but I am very honored to do it. I grew up watching Disney movies on VHS.

How challenging is it to perform the show live?

It's an outdoor show so we have to adjust for changes in the weather. Sometimes it gets so hot, and then so the sensor it gets chilly. Other factors include unexpected, unforeseen difficulties like losing microphone reception. But those are little things, because the result is so much fun.

Describe your rapport with the actor playing Zac Efron's character.

There are times audio lead singers. Two of them are Filipino. Anthony Sion Ming Gi is consistent so it's very comfortable, and Reuel and I worked together in Repertory Philippines. He always makes me want to sing every game when we're together. Jill Castillo is very playful so we have the most fun.

What are you learning?

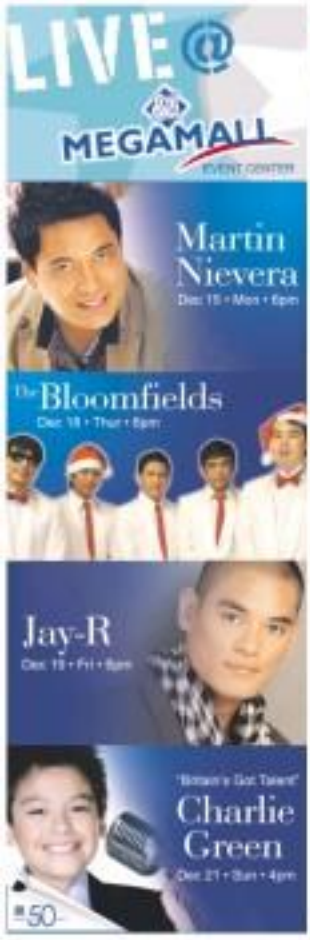
I am learning the importance of balance—keeping the show consistent and being in top shape every day—while being open to changes and learning more things.

HEART EVANGELISTA

WISH LIST

"I hope that life improves for our nation soon. Wag mo-nang kalimutan ang ating mahal-mahal na artista. I hope that the longest duty stay in the business, the more respected they will be by their colleagues. Kapag ganon na, they don't get paid properly. We really have to consider their contributions to the industry."

Marichel Cruz



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2 FOUR CHRISTMASES
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4 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL
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6 TWILIGHT
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8 180
9 LOVEBIRDS

METRO EAST

1 BOLT
2 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL
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4 TWILIGHT

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5 TWILIGHT
6 SCAREGIVERS

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DID YOU KNOW...

Chris Brown is Billboard's Top Artist '08

NEW YORK—THE accolades keep coming for recent Mariah winner Chris Brown. He's just been named Billboard's Top Artist of 2008.

"It's bigger than I can ever imagine. It's totally unexpected ... a surprise," Brown said in an interview Thursday.

It couldn't be that much of a surprise, really. Brown not only nabbed the Billboard honor in 2008, he had a great '08, with role hits like "Wall. Star" and "Forever" as well as successful collaborations, like the duet with Justin Timberlake on "Ain't Love much, he was three awards at the Soundtrack Music awards, including Artist of the Year.

But the 19-year-old Brown says he's still not used to the accolades.

"I've had a good year but I still feel a little nervous in front parts," he said.

AP

ACQUAINTANCES: Reeves with director Adrell Alix Jr.

Movie-TV board reprimands 'Eva Fonda' and Osang film

By Reuters/San Diego Jr.

THE MOVIE AND TELEVISION REVIEW and Classification Board (MTRCB) has reprimanded the ABS-CBN prime time soap opera "Eva Fonda" for showing "too-tid kissing scenes."

According to a report drafted by the board's special agents, the three-and-a-half minute between-lead stars Cristine Reyes and Jason Abalos, and Primetv Ryan and dialogue on Dec. 2 and 3.

The agents also noted that the board rules will complaints from viewers about the show's "mature theme which is deemed too explicit for public viewing."

As a result, the movie's special screening at the Robinsons Galleria on Friday was postponed. Alix said that he would apply for a second screen on Monday.

In an earlier development, Sheryl Anthony Sanchez's digital movie "Imbayani," which was top honoree at the Cinemanila and Cinema One filmfests, also got an "X" from the board.

As such, its cast at the indie film was similarly scrapped. Instead, a screening of the movie's "special version" was set at the UP Film Institute starting Friday.

UP is a state university.

(E-mail: bayanisanchez@yahoo.com

Daughter takes Mother Lily's seat

PRODUCER LILY MONTEVERDE HAS FORmally passed over management of Regal Films to daughter Roselle Monteverde-Teo.

Of her first children, Monteverde said, it was Teo, her third daughter, who had a disposition most similar to hers. "She also has the passion for making movies."

Teo said her first official act is to set up Regal Digital, which will focus on new filmmakers who can pitch their scripts for a possible production deal. Proposals will be reviewed by a committee and the chosen projects will be released DVD exclusively.

Initially, script proposals will cover three genres: drama, love story and youth, according to Regal Films project executive director.

Teo is also looking into the possibility of subtitling movie digital releases.

"Regal plans to produce 10 major films next year and we hope to subsidize 10 digital movies," Teo said.

"Our target is to produce at least one movie a month," Monteverde added.

Teresa said that the classic filmmakers can seat of Regal's pool of talents, along with its production and post-production facilities.

"They can even shoot to old Regal's interior sets, like Marian Rivera and Dingdong Dantes did in their digital movies," Teresa said.

To accomplish her new filmmakers can tap Regal's marketing, promotion and distribution team to make sure their digital movies reach target audiences.

They can also learn from the company's best directors in workshops to be executed in line with the digital venture, said Reyes.

She said she also is excited to work on "the challenge of working with new directors."

Reyes said Teo gives out of her way to watch the works of new talents. "New directors mean new out of fresh ideas. They're innovative, resourceful and full of passion," said Teo.

Regal is going full-steer with its digital arm because of the need to produce more content. Teo explained: "Local theater owners are willing to produce more movies, in anticipation of the slowdown in Hollywood production next year."

Reporter Sam Diego Jr.

Meralco Connects with the Public in Sharing the True Spirit of Christmas

Hookups, breakups, shockers and wrecks

OPRAH WINFREY ON BALLOONING TO 200 pounds: "I look at my thinner self and think, 'How did I let this happen again?' — I'm ashamed. I'm mad at myself."

***

Ricky Martin, on raising his twin boys, Marcos and Valentino, who were born last summer to a surrogate mother: "I'm the one who changes the diapers, the one that heats them, the one that puts them to sleep."

Baby boom

NEW YORK—The celebrity baby boom expanded into 2008 with the arrivals of newborns belonging to A-listers.

Brad and Angelina: Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt hit a new record payday selling their baby photos. Last summer, People magazine and the British tabloid Hello! paid $14 million in a joint deal to publish the first shots of the Jolie-Pitt clan with twins Knox and Vivienne, born in July.

***

Jennifer and Marc: Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony welcomed Max and Emme in February, waiting only weeks after Lopez gave birth to display the twin boy and girl on the cover of People. The magazine reportedly factored a $6 million bulge in its pocket for rights to the photos.

***

Halle and Gabriel: The daughter of Halle Berry and Gabriel Aubry will certainly grow up to be competition for future besties like Shiloh Jolie-Pitt. The Oscar-winning actress gave birth to Nahla Ariela Aubry in March.

***

Nicole and Keith: Two years after tying the knot, Nicole Richie and Keith Urban welcomed baby girl Sunday Rose in July. The 41-year-old Rodeon has called Tuesday "a miracle baby," crediting an unexpected fertility source: the waterfalls of the Australian Outback.

Hookups—and a split we saw coming

NEW YORK—Finding a mate in 2008: Here's a look at four notable couplings and one split we all saw coming:

Jon and John: John Mayer has dated everyone from Jessica Simpson to Jennifer Love Hewitt. This year, it's Jennifer Aniston. They have been on and off since last spring. Mayer has blabbed about how he melted their romance. And yet, she's taken him back, telling Vogue: "Love just shows up and you go, 'Oh, wow, this is going to be a bumpy ride and a half.'"

***

Rushes Special

Lindsay and Sam: Lindsay Lohan is still going strong with ultra-jockey Samantha Ronson. Tabloids report they're on the outs, but Lohan denied this on her MySpace blog, posting the song "Happy Together" to drive the point across.

***

Jay-Z and Beyonce: Beyonce has told Oprah that marriage feels great, but "the most important thing is to make sure you have your own life before you're someone else's wife."

***

Mariah and Nick: Mariah Carey faced love agents with Nick Cannon, an actor 11 years her junior. Most wanted an idea, marrying the "Dreamlover" star in her Bahamian estate in April after just weeks of dating.

***

Madonna and Kate: The least shocking split of the year hands down. Madonna and Guy Ritchie weren't fooling anyone when they danced rampant rumors of married strife, thereby stoking that gold-en rule of celebrity gossip: Where there's smoke, there's fire!

Biggest shockers

NEW YORK—This year's biggest celebrity shockers:

Heath Ledger: When news broke of Heath Ledger's death at 28, the response was a collective, "You're kidding, right?"

***

Jennifer Hudson: The Oscar-winning actress and singer had a new fiance and solo album in hoist when her worst nightmare came true. In late October, her mother and brother were found dead in the family home on Chicago's South Side, where Hudson grew up. A brutal search began for Hudson's missing 7-year-old nephew Julian, whose body was discovered days later in the back of an abandoned SUV. Hudson's estranged brother-in-law was formally charged with the triple murder.

Train wrecks

NEW YORK—Surprisingly missing in action from celebrity rumormonk-inside: Britney, Lindsay and Paris. Other stars nagged her the title of Hot Mess of the Year. Here are two who stole the tiara:

Amy Winehouse: The acclaimed soul singer continues to unravel in the public eye, this long list of problems—drug use, run-ins with the law and a dramatic marriage—seemingly multiplied this year after she won five Grammys for her 2006 album "Back to Black."

***

Gary Busey: The actor, 64, missed the Academy Awards' red carpet into a display more this year when he embroiled **Ryan Seacrest**'s interviews with **Jon Stewart** and **Laura Linney**. He warned Garner with an unsolicited bear hug, his horrified the unflappable Seacrest, who called the awkward encounter by politely suggesting they catch up later in the evening—yeah, right. *AP reporters from AP*

PAGALO parents of newborns, from left: Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman; Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez; Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt

JOHN Carlo "JC" Tiniero won P5 million after 19 days of difficult challenges.

Biggest local reality show purse so far

By Harold R. Cruz

NO. 2 CASTAWAY ROBERT OF said he had no doubt, misconceived, that his rival, basketball player John Carlo "JC" Tiniero, would be the first "Pinoy Kids Survivor."

"It was obvious. Most of the jury members favored him. This was apparent in the last meeting of the Tribal Council. They all perceived me as the traitor," Robredo bayou-to Entertainment on Friday night, shortly after the final Tribal Council meeting held at the GMA Network Studios in Quezon City.

In the winner, JC, 10, brought home P5 million, by far the biggest prize money given in a reality show in the country. JC competed with 17 castaways in 26 challenges in the 39 days he stayed on Devil's Island in Bob Ivanna, Batanes.

"But in my heart I feel as [illegible]," said Bob, 30, a sales executive. "After all, I made it to second place."

JC, meanwhile, said he felt overwhelmed by his victory.

What lessons have you learned from the show?

I learned to appreciate things that I used to take for granted. Kahit kunin ang gadgets ko sa akin ngayon, kayang-kaya.

You almost quit early on in the game.

We didn't have food during the first four days that we were on the island. Gabrang hirap. We also didn't have shelter. When I began to adapt to the situation, I realized that I wouldn't quit—my family would not like it. I wanted to prove to my parents and to myself that I can overcome any challenges.

Was it worth all your suffering?

Yes. I will forever treasure the experience I had on the island and the friendship I was able to form with everyone.

Who are you closest to from among the castaways?

Ellie (Pantig) and Jace (Pinero).

Who do you like the least?

Pedro Asman. I never got the chance to be alone in Chevy Dilduct because she got booted out of the game early, and Pacoy (Dane) because we moved from the same tribe. Mother (Carmen) was hated by most of the castaways, but I got to see his good side while we were there.

Growing up, were you spoiled by your parents?

Not really. It's the most independent lives among my siblings, even though I'm the youngest. Since I joined the varsity supplecommune on elementary school.

What did you want to prove when you joined this reunion?

Bahan "Survivor," people thought I was shy, weakly, pikhon at pagkain. But through the show, I was able to prove that I can be strong, skilled and talkative.

Take Five

You also wanted to bring home the money, of course.

All of us wanted to make the P5 million. I already told my parents that I'll give most of the money to them to help fund their business. Aside to fund I am still saving for myself. I want to surprise my parents' future once I want them to be happy when they see me.

Are you and your girlfriend (she still together? (Ano spend a day with JC on the island?

Yes. We've been together for five years now. Pitching adasta. She understands that "Survivor" would change a lot of things in my life.

You never attempted to flirt with the girls while on the island?

Hindi po. Hindi se gusto, pagod, payat at gitnit, di na pagsisi ako sa mga yan. We all treated each other like brothers and sisters.

What was it like when you first got back to Manila?

Though I wasn't aware of it, my family told I acted strangely during my first days back home. After a while I got used to sleeping on my bed, to eating in electric fan, to using regularly. While on the island, I had a lot of everything to like to eat when I got back. In two weeks, naman na lahat—hanggang pizza, ice cream, yogurt na lo!

E-mail: news@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Bernie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

CESAR Montano with Arnel Pineda

Cesar to do a duet with Arnel Pineda

I HAD A BLAST WITH MY college drop cronies Cesar Montano and Journey's front man Arnel Pineda at Buboy's scenic Poblacion. They were away back, during Arnel's struggling days at Lyndie.

"I was shy and he was busy," recalled Arnel. "But cracks proved the way we ca to be friends."

Now that Arnel has hit the big time, he and Buboy are planning to stage a concert to raise ran provisions.

"It would be so nice to see or to work with a great artist like Buboy," enthused. Buboy is equally excited that Arnel agreed to do a duet with him in his next album, "Isdod Ch"

"Hang kkon ang bone si Arnel," pushed Buboy. "Feeling ang feeling pasibaya na dmadamo."

My fren band Tese Pedrly Medwin and Eugene Manlil and Jake Lumocad gamely jammed with them. So did Dennes Ramos. Lit-a-singa-roll of them sing was pure euphoria!

Arnel remains grounded even if he is already very up there. "His most memorable moment with Journey so far is when the band won Store Party four choices for me and wonderful me as the new vocalist of the band," he said.

As we were saying our goodbyes in front of the store, a speeding car would have hit me if Buboy hadn't pull me back. Buboy is truly my fren friend. In my heart, I build a monument for him each day.

Pope-Martin concert

Pepe Fernandez had a couple

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

birthday dinner celebration with family and few friends.

"I was so busy the past months that I totally forgot to plan anything," said Pepe. "Martin, Ivan and my two boys gave me gifts from the heart. They all knew what I wanted."

Martin wasn't in the dinner because he was out of town. The much-awaited Papa-Martin Valentine concert is finally pushing through on Feb. 6 at the Big Dome, and Pepe's facebound, Jennet Whang is producing.

One kind of love gives way to another.

Lovey-dovey couple

JC de Vera and Rhian Ramos were spotted being so lovey-dovey at Bogie's. Millions of the hot local item seems to be something going on between them. Or are they just pals who happen to be ultra-sweet? French with benefits?

Peace, please

LJ Reyes besides all rumors that Shalev Tuhr committed suicide because of her.

An insider reveals that he ran the report of the sudden feud of Shalev and it shocked him. But without the family's consent, he is not at liberty to divulge the cause of death. Let's leave it at that and just pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

MANY must blithed needed the ABS-CBN crew who covered the wake because they violated his request not to air footage of Shalev in his coffin.

CHAO-TI

ALYSS-AM FINALIST HERE FOR SHOWS

"Amadeus Idol" Season 7 Filipino-American finalist Nicholas Holdaway is in town to perform with Ogie Alcasid, Princess and Gma 7's top 1 "Pinoy Idol" Dec. 20 and 21 at the Aliw Theater.

Child-safe TV programs cited

SEVENTY PROGRAMS FOUND LIKELY sensitive by 2,407 parents nationwide were recently honored the people's choice award called Anak TV Seal by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television. The awards ceremony was held at the Asian Cultural auditorium in Quezon City.

ABS-CBN, MBS and GTV ad with 13, 12 and 11 winners, respectively. ABC and NET 25 received nine each. DWIN won seven. Studio 23 received six seals. IBC receives IMBS one.

The parent-validity team, which set exhaustive award for the country's 15 most admired TV personalities.

The list of winners:

ABS-CBN: "Bianay Lang"; "Gabi, Ang Maraming Pwede"; "Juke at Julie"; "Kahalayang Hindi ni Inah"; "Maraying Bantog, Engender"; "Kimmylandia"; "Lambing Girls"; "Pilipinas, Game Ka Na Ba?"; "Rated K"; "Salamat Dok"; "Shaweet"; "Sisi"; "Sorbe Family Reklamers."

MBS: "Pamaos @ 12"; "Pagdiriwan"; "GIG Members' Area"; "Kapuyanan—Ako, Ikaw, Lahatan ng Magsabong Pilipino"; "Negosio, nga..."; "One Morning"; "Pilipinas Ngayon Na"; "Sinsay to Unan"; "Sir... Ka"; "Young Ones"; "Youth Voice."

ABC: "Barney and Friends"; "Bluey Clues"; "Bob the Builder"; "Chalkzone"; "Dora, the Explorer"; "Ito, Dingo, Ga"; "Spongebob Squarepants"; "Wordgirl."

GMA 7: "Art Angel"; "Bahay Bilibo"; "Expose Mo, Jessica Soho"; "Iyo Nanin Tayo"; "Love Lydia"; "Wish Ko Lang."

RPN: "RPN Is Awesomely."

IBC: "Bay Pinoko"; "Bulilingkod"; "Bunsoy and"; "Fantoy"; "Go Hogwarts"; "Hiyaal"; "Isa Bang"; "Kuh ne-'O"; "Little Pony"; "Make Way for Noddy"; "Mga"; "Phanie's Fantasy Journal."

BNC: "Bitoteng Langit"; "Bobay Time"; "Crabsy at Skatzy"; "Hellflame."

Studio 23: "Card a ¼ TV Show"; "Dibi-Dibong Quiz Bee"; "Math Think"; "Storebook"; "Wheek."

Net 25: "Cubby at Kalusugan"; "Filkids!"; "Kapatid sa Hamtubidoo"; "Monsters"; "Newsbrief"; "Sprout"; "Tibo"; "Weekend Report"; "World Report."

Anak TV also honored two radio talent and exemplary video work in Huang Bayan Gantsi videoke—Jonathan Jocson of Makati and Bello Sarcenas of Cebu. Honorable mention was Asphat Jon Reje of Muntok, for "promising videographer."

Favorite personalities

The top household favorites in the male and female TV personality categories is selected in a poll participated in by 4,002 voters nationwide are: (male) Julio Bobos, Pedo Pascol, Mike Enriquez, Edu Manzano, Jiles Lloyd Cruz, Robin Padilla, Tuy Dolos, Gary Valenciano, Kuya Kim, Ogie Alcasid, Arnold Clavio, Sen. Chiz Escudero, Gene Montano, Gerald Anderson, and Nihael Roman; (female) Kristi Sotelo, Sharon Cuneta, Mel Tiangco, Angel Locsin, Isnde Giovanna, Karen Davila, Jessica Soho, Christine Jacinda Bobos, Toni Gonzaga, Bernadette Sembrano, Vicky Morales, Judy Ann Santos, Ai Cooperpinas, Anne Curtis and Kim Chiu.

Top 10 favorite TV programs are "TV Patrol," "Pilipinas Game Ka Na Ba," "Rated K," "Mulawin Warriors," "24 Oras," "Lobo," "Art Angel," "Wish Ko Lang," "Hanggang Kay Lourdes" and "Bubongpalad."

Anak TV is headed by Edgardo Reyes, president; May Cruz Hotol, secretary-general; and Elline Gulmatico-Sawada, spokesperson.

RP seeks musician's release

RP officials are working with Dubai police to negotiate for Bandaluna guitarist Leo Dizon Reyes's deportation, instead of a possible jail time, following his arrest for "intent of misplaced" in his bags at the Dubai International Airport. The was reported by the Abu Dhabi newspaper The National.

DID YOU KNOW...

'08 TOP SNAPS

BIR, Jaguy Quizada were among the hosts of Pinoy Fernandez on June 13 (L-R) On June 13, he met with Philly Salcedo and Sen. Bong Revilla

'Emotionally draining' for Direk

By Hannah B. Cruz

DIRECTORY JOEY REYES SAYS "Magkaibigan," a tribute to the late action star Rudy Fernandez, is the most emotionally draining movie he has done.

"When Jaggy [Eduardo, Rudy's best friend] asked me to make the script, Rudy was in critical condition at the Cardinal Santos Hospital. By the time I was finished writing, Duboy (Rudy's nickname) had been buried. This was also at the same time that doctors diagnosed my friend (TV director) Reyes Adabe with cancer," the director told Inquirer during a media gathering last weekend.

Study succumbed to cancer in June, at age 56. Adabe was 62 when he died in October.

"I became very sensitive. I cried when the actors cried. I had tissues in my eyes whenever I told 'cut,'" Reyes recalled. "Lots of Rudy's wits was around when we shot the 'goodbye' and 'death' scenes. I can just imagine how difficult that was for her to see. I've thought of what could happen when the worst is the premiere."

Lorna's choice

Lorna had a hand in picking the members of the cast, said Reyes. In the movie on Erik Matti, Christopher de Leon, Dante Rivero and Shaleen Luna. "Lorna and I are convinced her blessed and Dawn are perfect for their roles. These actresses have the talent of hands. You will see that in the way they give importance to their families more than their work," Reyes explained. "They have unbelievable reputations as mothers."

"Magkaibigan" is the official entry of Maverick Films to the 2008 Metro Manila Film Festival. Reyes' "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," which featured Dawala and Tirso Cruz III, was last year's Best Festival Movie. Rivero also was awarded Best Festival Actor.

"I'm lucky that Jaggy wrote all my wife's first new movie. It's something to have a good actor who believes and supports his actor and director. Jaggy knew the people he works with," the director said.

Reyes said he was impressed with the way Jo Lora handled his role. "Christopher is supposed to be Rudy in this film. He's an amazing actor. He has conviction. Maybe this is because he's dedicating his work to Rudy," Reyes added. He last worked with De Leon in the romantic flick, "When Love Begins," top-billed by Aga Muhlach and Anne Curtis.

Real actresses

Reyes said he missed working with "real actresses" like Dawn and Maricel. "I told them, look, you actresses of your caliber be relegated to doing support roles in teenage stuff? This makes me sad."

JOEY Reyes

The director continued, "My instruction to the actors was that nobody acts. I told them, 'Do not give me TV soap opera acting because the audience has had enough of that.' When the audience watches this film, I want them to experience what the characters are going through. You should ask Dawn how hard it was for her when I told her not to cry while we were doing the 'death' scene. Her husband is about to die and I tell her she has to smile."

"Magkaibigan" also stars Tirso Cruz III, Bobby Andrews, Jaclyn Plasmeyer, Emperor Black, Alwyn uy and Hyun Adler.

E-mail metro@inquirer.com.ph

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3 FOUR CHRISTMASES PG-13 2:35, 4:50, 7:05, 9:20
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Walter Mart Jolo Cinema
Walter Mart Basilan Cinema
Walter Mart Tawi-Tawi Cinema
Walter Mart Catbalogan Cinema
Walter Mart Borongan Cinema

RUBOY with his grandson Chris, daughter Angela and son-in-law Cris that evening at Balinsasa.

Cesar to do a duet . . .

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Together again

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER "TITANIC," Kate Winslet and homemade DiCaprio are saving together again on the soothing Disney "Revolutionary Road."

Where they co-starred in "Titanic," still the biggest cinematic blockbuster of all time, Kate and Leo were young, vibrant and gifted, but not yet the bankable names that their breakout movie would help them become. Today Kate is known as one of the most consistently outstanding actresses in the biz, while Leo has finally grown up, from the brooding, overly sensitive pouch he has only 40mm to the caught action-cinema hero of the two recent movies, like "The Departed" and "Blood Diamond."

Expectedly, therefore, their comeback as a screen team, "Revolutionary Road," will showcase their new maturity and heightened acting acumen, making the youths they played in "Titanic" seem just callous, but shallow as well.

However, we should all resist the lofty temptation to push-push or otherwise downgrade their first movie-up, because it served an important purpose: It established them as the movie world's prince and princess most likely to make it big—and, more importantly, to stay up there, acquiring the box-office clout to be able to choose the best projects to push into production.

Many other young stars whose careers flew high like Leo and Kate's have since been eclipsed by even younger and brighter careers—but, to their massive credit, DiCaprio and Winslet have gone from film to film with easy grace.

They may never, ever get to star in a blockbuster as huge as "Titanic," but then again, they no longer want to. Their new co-starrer is much more rewarding by—revolutionary!

VIEWFINDER

Newton C. Torre

Diddi's story

This early, we urge a savvy producer to secure the rights to Meeting the recently departed Diddi Reyes' chronicle, tragic and lonely life story. It's bound to be a compelling motion picture—and a hit, at well.

Stories stand if today's unsuspecting generation was born being taken Diddi's singing and acting career had lost their luster. Her story is so iconic that it can be both pertinent and moving at any movie time.

The significant dramatic elements are all there: Young, lovely, sexy singer with a great body and an even more seductive voice. Success both as a blessing and as a curse. Love flaming passionately, turning bittersweet, then modifying to ashes. Betrayal against promises gone unfulfilled. Deception at every turn. Illness. Financial need, for all we know. Her downward spiral from stardom to rawboom.

And yet, throughout all those ups and downs—and downs—she no longer young singer retained her idiosyncratic temperament, and her strong sense of individuality and self. Her self-worth may have taken a beating from the cruel hardships of fate, but she remained Diddi to the very end. What a film that would make!

Who would be the best singer-actress to play Diddi? ZsaZsa Padilla would be a good choice. Any other suggestions? What about a brand new talent, as "screen-ight" discovery? Inspiring as that golden girl's ability, that would be exciting, too.

The points in Diddi's life story should be filmed, because it's a great cautionary tale that needs to be told, or we can all learn from it: About the thrifty brevity of fame, the dishonesty of advice, the toxicity of nutrition, the perils of the loony tunes, the misery of failure—and, after all is said and done, bruised and fractured hearts. It's a story that is the downability of the entire spirit.

'Cinema Fifi'

ABS-CBN's "Cinema Fifi" session finds exciting action-drama: On Dec. 20, "Mamat ng Lawin" The film is about a gang of three boys and a girl who go on an unexpected sojourn to a strange never-never land where they meet the legendary warrior, Lawin. Dec. 27, "Bilang Quispo." FIFI plays the king of pickpockets, who finds himself in a love-hate relationship with his counterpart in mystery.

Mama Plans Dj's Tour

Mama Pinero's DJ for four hits Klub Roma in Bellingo, Angeles City, Pampanga on Dec. 20 and Club Pong in Cebu City on Jan. 17, 2009. The tour serves as a primer for the reunion tour of the popular hip-hop group early next year.

Best Fil-Am band

The "Best Glam" search for the best Fil-Am bands in the US was recently won by the New York City Bandshow winners, Diddo Bands, at the Grand Face-off held to Sullivan Hall, NYC. Other Bandshow winners in Washington, Blackbird Pond, San Francisco, Gabaete, Los Angeles, 82Eyed.

Diddo Bayot's music is a combination of rock, grunge, rock 'n' roll and metal. The band aims to perform songs that encompass real-life experiences and situations that range from sensual innuendo to political satire.

Ruffa and Kris in a catfight?

By Rayzel San Diego Jr.

KUWA GUTIERREZ INSISTS THAT there's no diva war between her and "The Boss" co-host Kris Aquino.

Last week, in the middle of discussing Maky Ordo's death, Iris got distracted by Ruffa's mouth, which was upside down.

The single girl's war blows up into a fierce—reportedly in cyberspace, where Maky's fans reportedly consumed the "Brat" host for disrespecting the young actor's memory. Ruffa has apologized on behalf of the show.)

It was, observers noted, a rare sign that all's not well between Iris and Ruffa. The former beauty queen reportedly denied that in an exclusive interview.

"There's talk that Iris is envious of you," she told Boyette. "There's no need for her to feel threatened by me. We have our own hosting styles and she's at the top of her game. She's quite settled in her private life as well and she has reached a place where intrigues need no longer affect her."

Ruffa also has no reserved with rumors of a catfight on the set of the Metro Manila Film Fest entry "Segunda Uno."

Specifically, that she and co-stars Rufa Mae Quinto, Iza Calzado and Marian Rivera don't agree on a number of issues...from their billing to the height of their stilettos.

There was a report that Ruffa Mae went

KRIS Aquino and Ruffa Gutierrez

eight-inch heels in one scene so that she would be on an Iris-Ruffa (which TFC!).

"One director Lloyd Lumagnaoi asked me not to wear high heels," Ruffa said, laughing. "Why do I have to suffer just because I'm tall? They should just stretch out an apple box!"

As for the billing? "That's the manager's job. From the start, I knew I'd be first. I don't mind not being in the middle or on the poster either. I'm so tall, people would surely notice me."

She stressed, "There's no need to engage in a catfight just to promote a movie. As long as it is well-made, people will watch it."

She insisted that the "Desperadas" girls never had differences during the shoot. She explained, "The only things we fought over were our hair, makeup, clothes, shoes and bags."

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PDPS Fernandez, Kiri Ledesma, Zsazsa Padilla and Regine Velasquez at Mesh reborn by Jojo Sunman (above). At right, more show-stopping gear, this set by Edwin Uy

Ogie's eyes on the prize

By Reynold Sun Diego Jr.

AN INVITATION to apply per se, maybe Ogie Alcasid would gladly act as production assistant, stab-official photographer to girlfriend Regine Velasquez.

During the recent "Divas/Divos" concert at the Big Dome, Ogie gallantly stood on the sidelines, snapping pics of his longlived other several times as some carriage with his son, three-year-old Nathaniel Ledesma, Pops Fernandez and Janice Padilla.

Regine, along with 13-year-old Lorin and six-year-old Isaiah Ogie's own daughter Joy, a previous marriage to Australian beauty queen Michelle van Hanswijck, are among his favorite subjects, he told Inquirer Entertainment.

For Regine's birthday special, held at her home last April, he even climbed a tree to get the perfect shot.

"Photography is my hobby—a way to unleash my creativity (which I can't do in my jobs as singer, songwriter and comedian)," he explained.

He said he picked up the hobby from Richard Y. Ryan Aguinaldo and Francis Magalona.

OH REGINE. An ogre, "Star" is too beautiful not to photograph."

Talent, when it sizzles

By Emelie G. Velarde and Gerry Pilapil, Contributor
Photos by Ogie Alcasid

IF YOU MOUNT A GOOD show, they will come.

"Divas 4 Divos" was definitely a coming event, as it brought together one incredible dozen of the country's top female performers: Kiri Ledesma, Zsazsa Padilla, Pops Fernandez and Regine Velasquez, more than a mainstream of stardom, the current staple-caplit lured was a showcase of talent, the way it should be dispensed if the goal is to leave the audience in awe.

On Saturday, Dec. 6, the Araneta Coliseum was packed to the rafters, crackling in the stress-cleansing from the script unintentionally to say "Thank you all for coming tonight." And from encore, and again.

Some production kinks threatened to spoil things. There was an absence (Pawell Santiago waited a few days prior) and this took a slight toll on consistency, voicing, dance routines, wardrobe things, even blocking.

The boss Regine's, reportedly who experienced three of the other three—seemed happily oblivious of this, because their skills delivered everything but was expected. There would be lost notes, stopping duets and shocking front-row unregistered outfit embarrassment by Louie Occampo despite the (at times) less-than-perfect sound quality.

And Boss some: Regine was tasked to play the clown and class grid notch between high notes, this was effortless in both assignments. In fact, were she were only Regine got a product counter top cable shoot, with Iah, Zsazsa and Pops providing the perfect grounding balances to her occasionally overpowering behavior.

In any case, the rapport among the girls was clear and true, giving way to playful and tasty, sometimes hilarious, gab. We should note here that it was difficult to decide where to look at times of four voices performing although, to be sure, Pops was the best-loved, physically.

Yes, let's not forget the visual factor. The quarter's grand entrance in black and lit by Joey Stanton (one-phenomenal show) homage-and-prayer take on Whitney Houston's "Queen of the Night," Ta Vegas's "Free Your Mind," and Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful."

They celebrated Motown with a Brian Setzer stable, in process by Oliver Tolentino. Affect it came time to honor the then-defying Madonna, the girls came out in matching tuxedos by Edwin Uy.

The duets were especially outstanding. Pops and Regine's rendition of Bryan Adams' "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman" was the least learned and, it seemed to us, the most heartfelt and, therefore, the best. Kiri and Zsazsa's Aaron Lennox suite ("Sweet Dreams," "Here Comes The Rain Again") was smooth and spot-on as well.

Masterful with OPM

They were more measured and eloquent in the OPM classics portion, and were one to tilting the "amazing" arrangement by Bob Aves on "Ogoy ng Dagat."

As expected, Kiri stood out as the most-cautioned, vocally. But Zsazsa deserves special mention for her dance foray slot, she high-energy "Separate Ways." Pops clicked with a setting of Rihanna hits; Regine's medleys of Don Mclean's "And I Love You So" would turn out to be the most talked-about, post-event, outlining in point in the dirt. Watched because Ogie was diligently photographing her from the floor!

While "Divas" will surely be remembered as a small-scale concert-ish, there was a little more to be desired in terms of innovation. Her a few members of the audience verbalized a wish for "more dining treatment and more songs I like the girls) haven't done before." This observation is hard to contest.

On the other hand, there is much to be learned from Kidz's half-breadwinner here. It was the who be-loved and insisted that it would be done, and the fact that such a feat was pulled off again very well, indeed, for the local concert scene.

PDPS, looking stunning, proved she was the best dancer of the four.

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5 puzzles to keep you busy this holiday season J3

November lesson plan contest winners! J4

Editor Chelo Bunal Formoso

LEARNING

Do not reject your food heritage

HOMECOMING UP alumna Amy Besa receives a plaque of appreciation from UP Chancellor Sergio Cao and UPCHE dean Milagros Quimbo after her lecture.

By Perla Aragon-Choudhary
Contributor

AMY BESA, A GRADUATE OF THE INSTITUTE (NOW COLLEGE) OF Mass Communication in the early 1970s, returned to the University of the Philippines last Thursday to deliver a lecture but she did not need to use the mikes. Not at all.

Besa talked natural about food, glorious Filipino food, as forward speaker to the UP College of Home Economics "Looming Issue for Hunters of the Hospitality Industry" lecture series.

Before anything else, she told the Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management students gathered at the college-operated Tea Room, a place she said she could hardly afford as a student, "I want to debunk the notion about me being a maestra—because all of you have something to teach other people."

This, from the founder—together with chef husband Rainy Dorotan—of Cendrillon, the pan-Asian and Filipino restaurant in Soho, New York City that has placed Filipino cuisine on the international map and keeps rolling in making more people appreciate the variety of flavors and ingredients in every Filipino dish.

And this, too, from the winner (again, together with her husband) of the prestigious Jane Grigson Award for Distinguished Scholarship and Quality of Research and Presentation, given by the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) for their "Memories of Philippine Kitchens: Stories and Recipes from Far and Near" cookbook hook.

With her 13 years experience as a restaurateur in the Big Apple and three and a half years of research for the book, Besa, despite her pronunciation, was the right "maestra" to tackle the topic "Pinoy Restaurateurs in New York".

"A lot of Filipinos take their food for granted and look at French and Western food as superior," she said. "But that's not true. Filipino food is one of the most diverse in the world. And it has had a breakthrough in the United States. It just needs people to market and bring it out there. Each of you will have that responsibility. Maybe we can do something together.

"Do not reject your heritage," Besa exclaimed to the students.

"If you study Philippine history and culture, you will find that food is nurturing of fellowship and that it is delicious because it has been cooked with love and served with generosity and hospitality. You've no idea how important these values are until you get abroad where food is a chore. In nations, like ours, eating food is just like feeding up at the gas station," she said.

But just what is Filipino cuisine? Stands like adobo, pancit and bihon come from pre-Hispanic times and the late food columnist Doreen Fernandez found in every only Tagalog-Spanish dictionary 400 years ago, she said, and she adds—for daily meals'. Besa said in her lecture. "But we also borrowed, so there is a book on cuisines under Spain and their interaction with the colonies. When it came to the Philippines, the author was amazed that our colonizers were able to trade with Spain's, unlike Mexico and Puerto Rico. What very rare occurrence with what it has created. In fact, the first chapter of our book is on food that we have borrowed and made into ours."

Political statement

"Food is a political statement," said Besa. "I found many instances in UP-Los Baños of studies concluding that the Filipino diet was poor because it was primarily rice and fish, but there were also educational feeding for cooking classes in public schools on cupcakes, muffins, doughnuts and cookies—very American."

There—and how Filipinos liked to eat—and everything to do with history, she added. "We love fried chicken and broiled because the United States made sure that we would buy their products and that we would directly trade for their food."

Filipinos entered this love for American food with them when they migrated to America. But today Besa said, a huge Fil-Am community wanted to know more about their roots.

"Come part of that heritage and we fulfill it," she stressed. "But, hopefully, it can go home to that."

For Filipino food to make it big like Japanese food in California and like Italian food in New York, Besa asks every gourmand official the needs to help create

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The Philippine Home Economics Association made extra effort to celebrate with a convention on "Home Economics: Reflecting the Past, Creating the Future" at Bahay Pilipinas, Diliman Hills, Bahay. Founding president Dr. Helena Z. Benitez (left) inducts the officers for 2006-2010. Dr. Ma. Teresa Hamoy, president; Dr. Pedro Magno, vice president; Cristina Bahala, secretary; Carmelita Tan, assistant secretary; Dr. Belinda Agoli, assistant treasurer; Catalina Perlas, auditor; Dr. Belinda Guevara, PhD; Erika Madrid, treasurer manager; Board members Dr. Marilyn Pascual, Felicitas Manas, Belinda Serrano, and Julie Bagayaua, and Deanna Cecile Pascua, (computer other). Belinda President's successors while Sorry Hendrix as another board member.

Assumption brings back 4-year psychology course

ASSUMPTION COLLEGE is relaunching its four-year psychology program in response to demands from both the large companies and the growing college bookstore. The program under the Miscle Engineer School for Innovative Learning will prepare students for jobs requiring performance with strong interpersonal skills, insight on human behavior and motivation, and leadership and group dynamic skills. It also combines training and research experience in both social development and corporate settings. Graduates of Assumption's Psychology Department are now working in various fields, including human resource, special education (SPED), customer service, consulting, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and foreign service. They include 2006 Outstanding Students of the Philippines (TOSP) awardee Jennifer Torres, now a regional human resource analyst at the Louisiana Community and Technical College System in the US; Sherry Castaneda, an educator specialized in California for students with moderate and severe disabilities; Christina Joaquin Gaudia, in-flight service manager of Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong; Mary Rose Alcazar Grebe, private practitioner in clinical counseling; and Lara de Guzman, director of recruitment, by operations, MGM Mirage Promotions, Las Vegas. Several psychology graduates received the college's highest honor, the Maria Regina Award. These include Tessa and Crystal Joy Cabanero (class 2007), an Aeta Magantang leader who is now connected with Ayala ICB MAIL Inc. Screening of applicants for the first semester of school year 2009-10 is now ongoing. Interested parties may call 8177715 8170937 or visit Assumption College in San Lorenzo Village, Makati City.

JRU hosts stock specialists forum

JOSE RIZAL UNIVERSITY's Department of Economics College Division hosted the economic information exchange forum of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) in the university's auditorium. With the theme "University Stock Market Linkages for Economic Development," the forum was the university's Economics Society, with Professor Evelyn T. Boncan as adviser.

(L-R) WILHELMINA I. Hilo of JRU, PSE's Joy G. Peralta, Mark Anthony R. Valino, and Dr. Jhonnel N.T. Macalalad of JRU

TIP inaugurates new building in QC

THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE of the Philippines held recently the blessing of its new building in the Quezon City campus. The four-storey, four-building houses, two each additional technology rooms and a speech laboratory. It also has a computer room, server room, faculty lounge, restrooms on every floor, offices and faculty rooms of the College of Education and the Center for Teaching Excellence, Humanities and Social Sciences Department and Mathematics and Physics Department. Officiating at the blessing that coincided with the commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the school's Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Chapel was Rev. Fr. Arnold M. Abalocio, C.M.F.

UM leads in level 2 accredited programs

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINDANAO in Davao City has been granted accreditation for the fourth year by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). This year, UM had the highest number of Level 3 accredited programs in the country in terms of number of accredited programs in all levels. UM has more than 56 accredited programs, 10 with Level 3 status, 23 with Level 2 status, and the rest having either Level 1 status or are candidates for accreditation. UM's electrical engineering course was the first engineering program to get Level 3 status. The school is the first in Mindanao to get Level 3 status for liberal arts, business administration, secondary and elementary education. UM vice-operations Dinky Sahaya and research and publication director Dr. Maria Lourdes Amparo received the award.

ADNU programs get accreditation

THE PHILIPPINE ACCREDITING Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Pasucu) Board of Directors has given a new three-year (until November 2011) accreditation to the Ateneo de Naga University's College of Nursing, Education, Arts and Sciences, Information Technology, The College of Computer Studies and Electronics and Communications Engineering got an initial three-year accreditation until November 2011. Previously, the ADNU COE and the CIDSIT programs had Level III and Level II accreditation, respectively. The audit program and mid-level accreditation are also given accreditation by Pasucu in August.

FEU dean attends law conference

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT and dean of the Far Eastern University Institute of Law, Andres Bautista talked on "Law, Democracy and Development: The Philippine Experience" at the 6th International Law Conference in Germany organized by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Bautista's recent trip is primarily to discuss democracy in the Philippines. He said international organizations should adopt programs to nations' unique characteristics and specific needs. Countries represented were China, Germany, Kenya, Russia, Venezuela, Egypt, Romania, Argentina, South Africa, and the Philippines.

BAUTISTA

THE WINNING University of the East team shows office prizes and designs in the Jazz-Up Your Denim Contest.

UE fine arts students top denim contest

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST College of Fine Arts (UE CFA) team received the grand prize in the Jazz-Up Your Denim Contest organized by the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines, with Levi Strauss Philippines Inc. Senior advertising arts students Rico Wilson Custodio and Mary Grace Fernandez' pair painting student and fashion designer Rimsalabim dela Cruz received P50,000 in cash and a certificate of merit. For more information, call the UE ERA, call tel. 3621581 or 3624577, local 507, 503, 506, or visit UE Sidewalk, Sampaloc Road, Caloocan City, or log on to www.ue.edu.ph.

UA&P students join Bridge Year Program

THE UNIVERSITY OF ASIA AND the Pacific (UA&P) will send its students to the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain, under the Spanish school's Bridge Year Program. Rocio Davis, director of the IDE's Institute of Liberal Arts, says the program allows students from partner institutions to take Spanish classes and their regular courses for one year. Davis says students may also take their desired courses at the IDE starting next fall but they need first have a Spanish, a foreign language elective at UA&P. The University of Navarra was founded by St. Josemaria in Barcelona in 1952. UA&P is a nonprofit, non-sectarian school in Ortigas Center.

Ateneo hosts forum on digital technology

THE ATENEO GRADUATE School of Business and the Internet and Mobile Marketing Association of the Philippines (IMMAP) held recently a forum on increasing global reach through digital marketing at the Rockwell campus. The forum focused on the latest trends and tactics to elevate marketing competitiveness using the Internet and mobile gadgets. Reuben Buenaventura Jr., IMMAP founding director and CEO of Mobile Kitchen Inc., gave an overview of the topic. Other speakers were Ramon Isberto, president of Pinoy Exchange Inc. (PEx), who talked about how to launch successfully and capitalize on Internet trends among the Internet digital media. For information on the Ateneo Center for Continuing Education, call 8328282 or visit ce.ateneo.edu.

MICHAEL Palacios of IMMAP shares some insights and tips on how to succeed in digital marketing.

Playgrounds for the Mind

EUREKA! *Queena N. Lee-Chua*

Christmas puzzles

PUZZLES ARE NOT ONLY FUN AND EXHILARATING, but they sharpen our minds and refine us as well. Studies show that challenging our brains consistently can help delay diseases such as Alzheimer's.

In nursing homes in the United States and Japan, senior citizens regularly do crosswords, Sudoku, scrabble, and other games not only to bond with other people, but also to stay mentally healthy.

We do not have to be seniors to start doing puzzles—the earlier we start challenging our minds, the healthier we will be. Puzzles do not have to be very complicated. All we need are basic skills, some analysis, and a lot of perseverance.

During the ten years that this column runs in the Internet and Health section, I use puzzles for Christmas, and the response from readers had been very enthusiastic.

This year we continue the tradition but this time the puzzles are not just about mathematics and science, but also about language and general information. They do not require any special talent in any field, so children can also do them. Families can have fun solving these brainteasers together!

Language

How good is your English? Anagrams are formed when letters are rearranged to make new words. For example, an anagram of NET is TEN. Synonyms are words that have the same meaning. For example, a synonym for HUGE is GIGANTIC.

Now let us combine anagrams and synonyms together. Look at these three words: LEG, MERE, NET. When you combine the two words LEG and NET and rearrange the letters, you can form the word GENTLE, which is a synonym of the remaining word, MERE.

Get it? Here's another example. Look at these three words: TOO, MISS, SEE. When you combine the words MISS and SEE, and rearrange their letters, you can form the word BESIDES, which is a synonym for TOO.

Puzzle 1. Look at the three words: NAME, TENDER, DARLING. What two words will you combine to form a synonym for the remaining word?

Science

Propane is a gas derived from petroleum during processing. It is commonly used as fuel for engines, heating, and cooking. Propane can also become a liquid, as in liquefied petroleum gas, anyway, here is the puzzle:

Puzzle 2: You are in a room filled with 100 percent propane gas. You strike a match. What do you think will happen and why?

History

Oh, the gallant knights and fair ladies of yore! Though the medieval times are long past, many of us are familiar with stories, poems, battles, popularized by books and movies such as "King Arthur" and "Lord of the Rings."

What do knights wear during tournaments or battles? Armors, of course. Here is the next puzzle:

Puzzle No. 3: What action carried out by knights because of their armor still remains to this day, when nobody wears armor (except for actors in movies)?

Logic

Logic is perhaps the most enjoyable of all math puzzles. No one dying, there are no murders involved! Yet another elementary school children can (and often do) bore adults at this game. Think about this next challenge:

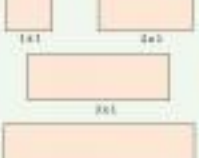
Puzzle 4. Five suspects, one of whom is guilty, are interrogated separately by the police. They have come up with the following statements. Only three of the statements are true. Who is guilty and why?

Alex said, "Emma did it."
Belinda said, "I was not the one who did it."
Christina said, "Emma is not guilty."
Gemma said, "Alex is lying when she accused me."
Emma said, "Belinda is telling the truth."

Geometry

The area of a rectangle is its length multiplied by its width. For example, the area of a 4-cm by 1 cm rectangle is 4 square centimeters, and the area of a 2 cm by 3 cm rectangle is 6 square cm. This last puzzle is especially tricky, so watch out!

Puzzle 5: Put four rectangular pieces on a table. One piece is 1 cm x 1 cm, the second piece is 2 cm x 1 cm, the third piece is 3 cm x 1 cm, and the fourth piece is 4 cm x 1 cm. Your task is to arrange them on the table so that they form a perfect square. How do you do this?



Readers, send your solutions to the five puzzles. Do not just send your answers; please add your explanations (or holmes) to the answers. The first five revealed with the best solutions will receive my latest book "The Filipino Family Surviving the World," co-written with well-known psychologist Fanny Cruz-Jardeleza and published by Anvil.

Winners and winning solutions will be published in a future column. Send your solutions now, with your name, address, and contact number to lhuillen@yahoo.com.

E-mail Queena N. Lee-Chua at lhuillen@yahoo.com

Gifts that teach

Playing Santa soon? You can be a big hit with the kids if you give toys, and an even bigger hit with the parents if your gifts foster creativity and learning.

BLOOMING Melon scent with a dainty lucky charm bracelet and a ring with three colorful hearts

JOURNALS for fair little girls

Time will tell

If there is a training bike, there is also such a thing as a training watch. An ordinary adult watch can be the bane of things: It is numbered 1 to 12 for some hours, 1 minute, 1 and 2 minute 30 and so on, depending on the 2 hands; one should be from the other. FitKids by Swatch are watches designed to make learning to tell time easier, not to mention, more stylish. So, the kids, Fit Kids is available at Swatch stores in all major malls.

SPEED Racer's racing features the hand's color number 6 and can, and a characteristic ring

SEE and Spell from Melissa and Doug

Play and learn

The Pocketful of Kids. Be sounds' school interactive toy village, carries a wide range of educational toys. Some have been taken out of their packaging so kids can play with them. But go store before Christmas so you'll go hunting, and on back with the kids after the holidays. 1ST Group 3000, Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Jerk, 6345588 and 6348851

LIGHT and Series Math Game from Learning Resources

WOODEN Animal Stacking Blocks from Melissa and Doug

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ENROLL NOW!

What I've learned

Food for both body and spirit

Amy Besa

MY HUSBAND AND I opened our Philippine pan-Asia restaurant in SoHo in Manhattan on Aug. 8, 1995. We called it Cendrillon and Lan August, we celebrated our 13th year in the business on 8/8/08—lucky 13 on the 08 were good luck dots of 888.

Despite the anxieties and the looming threat of a depression, we consider ourselves blessed to have survived seemingly insurmountable problems in building a reputation for showcasing what is delicious, healthy and good about Filipino food.

Our biggest source of pride is the publication of our book, "Memories of Philippine Kitchens," which came out in November 2006. It is a beautiful book because the editor and the publisher trusted it with great care and respect for the country and its culture.

When we launched the book in the US and gave talks to Filipino communities in different cities and states, the question that was always asked was: why Philippine food was underseen and invisible in the US landscape.

Everywhere from snacks appealed most among Filipinos because they knew of any mother and auntie cooked for me as a child. Your book has rekindled my passion for food and now I feel that I can move forward in my career knowing that my food heritage has to be the basis of whatever I do in the future."

If you ask me, in a restaurant, what is the most important lesson I have learned that I want to impart to you today, that is it.

You will not be successful when you have not fulfilled your professional if you do not embrace your food heritage. If you don't acknowledge that you are a Filipino born and raised eating all the wonderful flavors of pain, tapsilog, your fruit like mangosteen, guyabano and durian, everything in the middle and the vegetables in the rice and noodles.

I hope I can instill in you the desire to embrace what is your own and not take it for granted because it is really found in your surroundings.

Believe me, you have no idea what a concept value can do for my dear. Whenever I come home, I have to think, look twice just every day, from your handbag and all the other treasures that I've got at the Salcedo Market and marvel at all the varieties of fruit I can get. But one can still get very far here.

When you leave home—that is the first thing you will realize—but today we are in the Philippines to have them.

I have learned that Filipinos are the most adventurous food eaters in the world. You have no idea how much pleasure it is to share food with people who will celebrate to eat any dish that does not belong to their own region or locality. So please do not ever lose your love of food, your wonder of textures and flavors both familiar and strange.

It is also important for you to develop your entrepreneurial principles in your approach to food. What do you value in food? What is it for? How do you improve the lives of the generations that will be with us? Do you cook at food?

Food is for nourishment not only of the body but of the spirit. It is the glue that binds communities and builds fellowship among people.

The most memorable dinner I have ever had was when friends hosted a party at Constellation and at the end of the night dinner and that they had together to eat and none very hungry. Some told them to sit around a table and proceeded to the kitchen. He came out with leftovers he had left in the kitchen: adobo, leftovers, sautéed vegetables. These were dishes that we ate every day, but on that night, they tasted especially delicious because they were being shared and given with generosity and hospitality.

And, of course, being Filipinos, we started chatting and gossiping while helping ourselves from the platters on the table. Funny was so inspired by our vociferous appetite that he proceeded to put some salsa, the way we used to eat our meals in our provincial homes when we were children.

Amy Besa was recently in town to receive the Pioneering Filipino Award for 2008 in recognition of her 10-year-old restaurant and for the internationally acclaimed culinary book she coauthored with her husband, chef Romy Dorotan, "Memories of Philippine Kitchens," published by the UP by Gerard Lico & Chang, with photographs by Neal Oshima.

INQUIRER IN EDUCATION

IIE LESSON PLAN CONTEST WINNER FOR NOVEMBER

Graphing it

This simple study guide submitted by math teacher Dorianne Feliciano of Mangi Elementary School in Pangil, Laco, Compostela Valley Province, is meant to be taught in the second of fifth grade level.

Objective
At the end of the lesson, the students must be able to read and interpret data presented in a line graph.

Materials
Graphing board (optional); Student Activity Sheets; Teacher Resource Sheets; clippings from the business section of the Inquirer, Manila paper, pastel pens and masking tape

Procedure
Motivation
Present and read to the class the story in Teacher Resource Sheet 1 and then ask the following questions:
1. How tall was Leo at the age of 7? At the age of 10?
2. How much was the increase in Leo's height from 8 years old to 9 years old?
3. What makes him grow faster? Do you want to be like him? What will you do then?

Presentation of the lesson
Present to the class the line graph that shows the records of Leo's height (next, Teacher Resource Sheet 1 - make a bigger size to present to the students if possible). Ask the following questions:
1. What do you see on the figure?
2. What is this figure all about?
3. What do you call this figure?
4. What are the labels indicated in the graph?

Lesson proper
1. Provide a short discussion on graphs, line graph and its parts to the students. Use the concept explained from the presentation (see Teacher's Resource A). This will assist them to read/interpret data presented in a line graph.
2. Organize the class into groups of five, or as desired.
3. Assign a leader to facilitate the given activity, and the secretary to consolidate the answers of the team on a manila paper.
4. Hand out to each group the Student Activity 1, peso-dollar exchange rate, and the other needed materials.
5. Set a time allotment for them to complete the activity.
6. Ask a volunteer from each group to present their output to the class.

Evaluation
1. Reorganize the class into groups of four.
2. Distribute to each group the Student Activity 2, cartolina clippings from the Internet and other needed materials.
3. Let them do the activity cooperatively without a given time.
4. Ask a volunteer from each group to present their output to the class.

Assignment
Ask the students to cut out graphs from the business and present written questions about the graphs for their classmates to answer.

Activity Sheet 1

Peso-dollar exchange rates

Based on the official government and Philippine banking system data, below are the exchange rates (in Philippine pesos per US dollar) for Nov. 10-18, 2008:

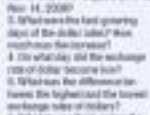
Date	Philippine peso rate of 1 US dollar
Nov. 10, 2008	50.685
Nov. 14, 2008	50.987
Nov. 15, 2008	49.421
Nov. 16, 2008	49.888
Nov. 17, 2008	49.739
Nov. 18, 2008	49.751

Directions: Read and interpret the line graph on peso-dollar exchange rates and answer the following questions:

1. What is the title of the graph?
2. How much was the exchange rate of US$1 to Philippine peso on Nov. 14, 2008?
3. What were the last consecutive days of the dollar sales? How much was the increase?
4. On what day did the exchange rate of dollar become low?
5. What was the difference between the highest and the lowest exchange rates of money?
6. What do you think makes the dollar rate increase? Decrease?
7. Do you think the changing rates of the dollar affect our economy? Why or why not?

Write to us at: SEQ@inquirer.net; Inquirer, 160 Pasong Tamo St., Makati City (Inquirer newspapers)

Student activity 2



Directions: Read and interpret the data on the line graph and answer the following questions:

1. What is the line graph all about?
2. Describe the horizontal and vertical labels of the line graph.
3. What was the exchange rate of the US dollar to Philippine peso on Oct. 10, 2008?
4. On what day did the dollar rate reach almost P49?
5. What is the approximate difference between the peso-dollar rates of Oct. 24, 2008 and Nov. 5, 2008?
6. Explain briefly the effect of the changing rates of peso against dollar to our economy.

Teacher's Resource A

Graph - means of showing data in order to visualize the data easier to interpret and understand

Line graph - used to show patterns or changes in data over a certain period of time. It uses points connected by a line to show data.

Parts of a line graph:

1. **Title** - It consists of a few key words that explain what the graph is about.
2. **Labels**. The horizontal label across the bottom and the vertical label along the side tell us what kind of data are shown.
3. **Scales**. These are the numbers on the horizontal (x) and vertical (y) axes that show the units used on the line graph.
4. **Points**. These are dots on the graph that show data.
5. **Lines**. These connect the points to present the graph.

The above parts are important to understand the data presented on a line graph. A line graph helps one can easily and clearly the changes the data presented. In reading and making the data presented in a line graph, we usually compare the rate or terms (if the exact amount or quantity) quickly presented.

Teacher Resource Sheet 1

I'm Growing

Leo went to his aunt's house one day. "Good morning, Aunt Margie," greeted Leo.

"Oh, my, how you've grown!" his aunt said slowly.

"Really?" asked Leo.

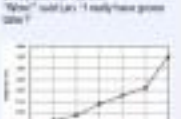
"Well," said his aunt. "There's one way to find out. Don't you remember we keep track of how tall you are when you were and child every year?

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Leo. "I remember, too. You'd ask me to stand by the door and you'd draw a line to see how tall I was. Do you still have them?"

"Of course," answered Aunt Margie. "Come on, let's take a look."

Here's Leo's record:
At 5 years old, Leo was 82 cm.
at 6 years old, 92 cm;
at 7 years old, 100 cm;
at 8 years old, 115 cm;
at 9 years old, 121 cm;
at 10 years old, 150 cm.

"Wow!" said Leo. "I really have grown taller!"



Do not ...

Campaign!

waste producers get behind and more farmers and produce food with accurate labels and good packaging.

"Given reliable and regular supplies and distribution of fertilizing, rice, fish that also, yams and fresh prawns," she stressed.

In the beginning she was accused by some Filipinos of serving dishes not Filipino enough—even if Dorotan and she had reproduced the recipes cooked by the grandmothers. But who has the right to define Filipino? "I left in 1971," she said. "It's other generations has appeared and maybe what I remember of the flavors is not in their memory."

Unsung hero

But dreams have come to Cendrillon—ordering and did not by every one in the group, according to Besa. "One was on ice skating champion who loved adobo because of her Filipino nanny. Yes, the yaya is the unsung hero of Filipino cuisine."

After a lively open forum, Besa urged the house food manager's and everyone to really the Filipino palate interestingly.

"When you see something, find out what flavors are in it and what you like about it. The US and other Western cultures adored varieties are made up of many sensations from the Old World when the old dishes, like adobo, were one. But now everything has changed."

Francine what is really Filipino, she also suggests.

"Bagoong has an equivalent in the stinky fermented food that sustained the people of Rome. Let's ensure that it can be competition from Thai and Vietnamese fish paste. Let's eliminate MSG when we sell it in the US and package it (internationally for high-end heaven, as they do."

The future of food and the health of people around the world lies in the hands of people like the students in the audience, according to Besa. "You're going to be in the forefront of decisions for the coming generations. Be true to yourself and develop reflexes. Respect those your sustenance! Money does not solve all problems."

Besa also gave practical tips such as developing more respect for watering—"I like clean up and throw out the garbage"—and designing creative and contemporary Filipino, one in lieu of blindly or stereotypic items in restaurants.